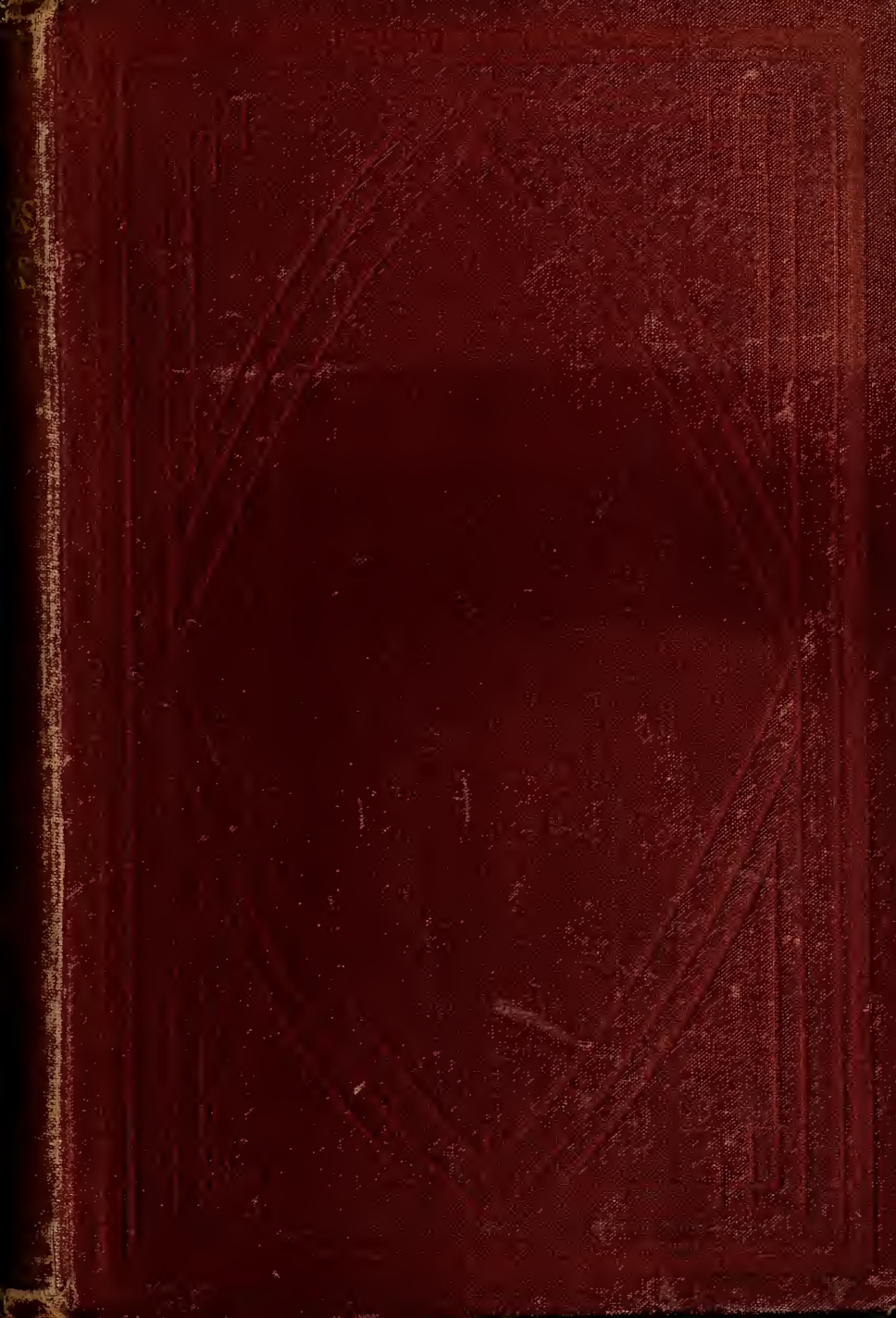






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EXHORTATIONS

AND

SERMONS

FOR ALL THE

SUNDAYS AND FESTIVALS OF THE YEAR,

ON THE SACRED MYSTERIES

AND

MOST IMPORTANT TRUTHS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

BY THE REV. JOSEPH MORONY, S.J.

“Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it.”—ST. LUKE.



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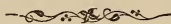
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THE publishers have very great pleasure in presenting to the public, in their own plain, native dress, unattended by any pomp or ornament of expression, but replete with important instructions and solid truths, adapted to the most common concerns of life, the *Exhortations and Sermons* of the Rev. Joseph Morony, S.J. It is hoped that every allowance will be made for a posthumous work of this kind, where only instruction and edification are aimed at—should, however, any be found who look for rhetorical flowers and beauties of diction in moral discourses, or who attend only to the arrangement and choice of words, and neglect the sense, it may not be improper to lay before them, with great submission, the following remarks, extracted from a much-admired work of the celebrated Abbé Grou :—

“To pay no attention to the nature of the things themselves, and attend only to the beauty of the discourse ; or to suffer the mind to be dazzled with the arrangement of words, and to neglect the sense of them, is a defect that is but too common. This disposition of mind proceeds from an essential want of judgment ; for the expression is merely for the thought ; the whole drift of it is to deliver the thought that it may pass through the organ of the senses into the minds of others. The greatest merit, therefore, of

any discourse, or of any composition, is in the thoughts being true, just, and solid, and in the arguments being conclusive; and this is what the hearer or the reader should seek for, preferably to everything else. The style, the eloquence, and all that appertains to the art of speaking and of writing, should only be employed to represent the thought in its genuine light, and in its proper energy. What advantage accrues from a discourse that has purity of language, that is brilliant, pathetic, and figurative, if the substance be not solid, or if all that pomp only serves to paint and embellish falsehood? On the other hand, what great harm results from a work which, though not written in perfection, is solid in thought and in sentiment? I know that the perfection of a composition is the compound of these two things; but in the choice there should be no hesitation; and that which is well thought should always have precedence of that which is only well said.

“The test, then, of good sense, depends on the attention that is paid to the substance of things. The contrary, however, is but too common, and even in matters where the mode of expression ought to be the least attended to. Sermons, for example, the end of which is to instruct the people in the tenets of faith and in morals, cannot be too simple and familiar as to the expression, no more than they can be too solid and accurate as to the thought. The hearer should only esteem and value that which enlightens him, moves him, and excites him to goodness; and this also is the sole object which the preacher ought to have in view.

“Nevertheless, in what light are sermons considered now? As discourses of parade, in which the preacher displays his talents, and the auditor the delicacy of his taste.

A most shocking abuse, which vilifies and profanes a sublime and heavenly ministry, and renders it, at least useless, for the advantage of souls !

“How has this happened ? Is it owing to the preachers or to the hearers ? I do not know. But I know so far, that both the one and the other are in these times equally and almost universally corrupted ; that those seek only to please and not to convert ; whilst these have every other object in view besides that of being instructed, and of being excited to live better.

“A good sermon is at present nothing more than a discourse well divided and arranged ; full of affectation and a false brilliancy, both as to thought and style. O Paul ! where art thou ? Why dost thou not fulminate against these unworthy ministers, and put to confusion those Christians who resort to churches to judge if a sermon be composed and delivered according to the rules of oratorical art ? Is it thus that the Athenians went to hear Demosthenes on their political affairs, and did this orator study to please them more than to persuade them ? Are the important interests of salvation of less moment than those of the State ? And if the pageantry of wit, or far-fetched thoughts, and of affected expressions, be absolutely unseasonable in every serious discourse, how much more so must it be in a Christian discourse ?

“The cause of the evil is, that those who preach, as well as those who hear, have lost the idea of the evangelical ministry. For, did the preachers consider that they are ambassadors of the Most High, that they speak in the name of Jesus Christ, that they are commissioned to announce to men great truths—eternal truths—the only important truths, their sermons would be at once more

nervous and majestic. They would rise above human eloquence through a contempt of it ; they would persuade the minds—make deep impressions on the hearts of their hearers ; they would, in short, approve themselves worthy instruments of grace.

“ Did the hearers also reflect on what their duty obliges them to seek for in sermons, on the motives which should lead them on, on the disposition they should be in, and on the fruit which they ought to draw from these discourses, they would forsake those stage-orators, those fine speakers, whom interest, vain-glory, and ambition induce to mount Christian pulpits, and they would flock with eagerness to the sermons that are simple, instructive, pathetic, and full of the unction of apostolic men. They would oblige those who are not so to become such, who, finding themselves abandoned, would either quit the sacred function which they dishonour or betake themselves to a worthy discharge of it.

“ Preachers, it is true, ought not to regard the depraved taste of their hearers. It belongs to them to give the law on the manner of preaching ; and they would always preach well if, with ordinary abilities, they endeavoured to instruct and to move ; if, in order to sanctify others, they began by sanctifying themselves ; if they had no other views than such as become apostles ; and if their way of life proved that they were intimately penetrated with the truths which they deliver. They are, therefore, culpable when they subject themselves to their auditory, and when they sacrifice to a depraved judgment those sacred rules which religion, as well as sound sense and true taste, impose on them.

“ But the hearers themselves are not less blamable, either

when they censure and despise solid and Christian preachers, who have not all the wit, all the agreeableness of figure, of voice, and of gesture, which they could wish ; or when they extol to the skies, and follow in crowds some certain orators who are hardly Christians, on account of their fine composition and pleasing delivery.

“How prejudicial to religion is this rage of preferring, in sermons, frivolous and profane ornaments, to the noble and majestic simplicity of the Gospel ! Is it no longer the word of God that people hear, or that they are desirous of hearing, but the word of man ; nor yet is it the word of a man who handles those sublime matters with proper dignity, but of a vain, ambitious, and interested man, who prostitutes the sacred function in the display of his own abilities to advance in life and obtain worldly advantages. How shameful, how detestable is this profanation of the ministry of Jesus Christ ! What will he say at his Last Judgment to such preachers and to such hearers ? ”

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EXHORTATIONS AND SERMONS

FOR THE WHOLE YEAR.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

THE Nativity of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, being one of the greatest festivals in the year—the ground-work of the redemption and salvation of mankind—the Church has thought proper to employ a considerable space of time to prepare the faithful for that great solemnity. This space of time is called Advent, or the coming of the Lord. In order, therefore, to comply with the zealous, charitable, and pious views of the Church of Christ, we are to apply ourselves particularly during this holy season to penance and godliness, that Christ Jesus may vouchsafe to visit us with his holy grace, so as to be born spiritually within us. We are, in a word, “to prepare the way of the Lord,” as St. John Baptist said when he began to announce our Lord, “and make straight his paths.” This preparation consists in two points:—1st, in forsaking our evil ways; and, 2nd, in improving in virtue.

Forsake your evil ways, Christians, “for now is the hour for us,” as St. Paul says in the Epistle which the Church reads this day, “to arise from sleep,” that is, the lethargy of sin! “Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day—not in rioting or drunkenness—not in obscenities or impurities—not in contention or emulation—for our salvation is nearer now than when we believed.” Every moment of our lives brings us nearer and nearer to that last and dreadful moment on which depends our eternal lot, either for happiness or misery.

Lest her mild and gentle lectures should prove insufficient, Christians, to induce you to forsake your evil ways, the Church, this day, wishes to excite a holy terror in your souls, by laying before you the dreadful picture of the last and

universal judgment. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." The consideration of this dreadful mystery of religion is expedient and seasonable, at a time when we are preparing to behold the lamb-like appearance of our God upon earth. Who can seriously reflect on that last and tremendous day, its foregoing signs, the attendant circumstances, and the frightful consequences that must ensue, without the liveliest apprehensions of the judgments of God? No one can be so insensible as not to be moved and terrified at the dismal alterations that are to appear in the sun, moon, and stars; the distress of nations; the roaring of the sea and of the waves; the furious conflict and warring of the winds; the confusion of the elements; the sudden shock and violent agitations of the earth; the shaking and removing of the powers or pillars of the heavens; and, in fine, the convulsion of all nature! The terror and consternation will then be so great, as Christ Jesus assures us in the Gospel this day, that "men will wither away with fear and the expectation that shall come upon the whole world." But what must be the sensation of sinners, when "they shall see the Son of Man coming upon a cloud, with great power and majesty?" And how dreadful must that scene appear, to which all the rest was only a prelude! What darkens our understandings, at present, from a clear perception of the severity of God's justice, or even an apprehension of his judgments, is, that "we only see things through the mist of faith," as St. Paul says, and are witnesses to as many acts of clemency, as of justice and severity, on the side of God. But at the last day, we shall see things as they are, and nothing but severity and rigour. The mercies of God will then be at end, and give way to his inflexible wrath and justice. Then the Son of God will appear as "the roaring Lion of Juda," and avenge upon all sinners the many offences and outrages they had committed against the Divine Majesty, in the violation of his laws? Here I might lead you to the contemplation of the fury, despair, and confusion of the sinner, on being separated from the just, on seeing every foul action of his life laid open and exposed to the whole world, and on hearing the dreadful and irrevocable sentence passed on him, of sufferings and torture among the devils in hell for all eternity; but the nature of this discourse does not admit of deep and diffuse reasoning. I cannot, however, avoid observing, that we, every one of us here present this day, will all appear at that general meeting of all mankind, in presence of the Supreme Judge of the living and the dead. "This

generation shall not pass until these things are fulfilled." When they shall happen is of no consequence to us—but in what character, is of the last consequence. Shall we be ranked amongst the sheep or goats? the just or sinners? those that shall calmly support the presence of the Lord, or those that, withering away with fear from a consciousness of their guilty lives and the terrible evils that are ready to burst over them, shall in vain invoke and call on the hills to cover them, and the mountains to fall on them, so as to screen and shelter them from the face of the living God? This is a subject for proper, wholesome meditation—let us, therefore, think frequently of it, that, by fearing the judgments of God, and avoiding everything sinful, we may prevent the dreadful consequences of the wrath of God. "Look well to yourselves" (they are the words of Christ Jesus, after the Gospel this day) "lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and lest that day on a sudden surprise you; for, like a snare, it shall come upon all those that sit upon the face of the whole earth. Watch, therefore, at all times, praying that you may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of Man."

The second thing we have to do, in order to prepare for the coming of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is to apply particularly to godliness and piety. For St. Paul, after enjoining us, in the Epistle of this day, "to cast off the works of darkness," orders us "to put on the armour of light," that is, to square all our actions by the principles of religion, and the maxims of Christ Jesus, who is the light of the world. The apostle even goes farther, and desires us "to put on Christ Jesus;" meaning thereby, to show a certain resemblance with him, by a perfect imitation of his life and virtues. A great many have no other notion of religion than avoiding certain crimes and excesses which heathens themselves would blush to be guilty of. But this is a very great and prejudicial error; for religion, or virtue, consists not only in avoiding the great crimes prohibited by the law, but likewise in doing the good, and practising the virtues prescribed by the law; and not only doing the good and practising the virtues prescribed by the law, but carrying that good, and those virtues, to a certain degree of perfection. This is what St. Paul sets forth, when he says—"He that is just, let him become more and more just; and he that is holy, let him become more and more holy." Although it should be the chief care and business of every individual to do so at all

times, yet it is more particularly so in the season of Advent, which we are now entering upon, as this season is particularly allotted for that purpose by the Church. As even the most regular liver, punctual and faithful to their duty, are very apt, in process of time, to slacken in their devotion and fidelity to God, from the cares and solitudes of this world, it was necessary to lay out certain seasons of the year, in which the faithful may gain what they had lost, and improve their virtue to higher degrees of perfection, by a particular application to acts of religion and righteousness. This is what the Church has in view. Let me, therefore, beseech you, as St. Paul did his disciples—"Be ye renewed in spirit;" apply yourselves at present to the practices of piety, with new eagerness and fervency of spirit; become more assiduous at prayer, more humble in your deportment, more charitable to your neighbour, and more fervent in the service of God; for thus only will you comply with the zealous and wholesome views of the Church, in preparing the way of the Lord, and removing the obstructions that hitherto prevented the spiritual birth of Christ within our souls. You are not only to perform your usual devotions and good works, but perform them with more attention, more devotion, more alacrity and cheerfulness; and finally, with more ardent desires of pleasing God, and keeping yourselves always united unto him. This is what the apostle calls "putting on Christ Jesus," because it is following his spirit, his maxims, and his ways—and likewise because it may be justly said of one who behaves in this Christian-like manner, as St. Paul used to say of himself—"It is not so much I that live, as Christ Jesus that liveth within me."

Let us, therefore, put on a firm resolution of "making straight the paths of the Lord," during this holy season, by a particular application to the duties, the exercises, of virtue and religion. If we do, Christ will certainly visit us, and not only visit, but be born spiritually within us, and so dwell with us by his holy grace. "If any one will love me," says Christ Jesus, "he shall be loved by my Father, and we both will come and dwell in him." This is the happy situation to which I wish to lead you, Christians—a situation that makes us the friends of God, the favourites of heaven, and living members of our mystical head, Christ Jesus—a situation that unites us to Christ by grace; and, possessed of his holy grace, we become possessed of an infallible earnest of eternal happiness. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

JOHN, mentioned in the Gospel this day, was the precursor or forerunner of Christ, of whom Isaiah says, "Behold I send my angel before thy face, who shall prepare the way before thee." He was called the Baptist, because of the baptism of penance he had preached in Judea before Christ had assumed his public character among the Jews, and because he had the happiness of conferring this same baptism upon the Saviour of mankind. As he was to announce and make known Christ Jesus in the world, he was endowed with the greatest gifts of heaven, and raised by Almighty God to a most eminent sanctity; insomuch, that Christ Jesus declares, "there had not risen a greater man than John the Baptist amongst the children of women." Yet with all his sanctity, with all the advantages of being the forerunner of the Messiah, and the person who had pointed him out publicly as "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world," how is he treated by the world? With the greatest severity imaginable—as we learn from the Gospel this day, that John the Baptist was languishing in prison in heavy chains, whilst the meanest and most worthless part of the creation enjoyed the blessings of ease, opulence, liberty, and life. How unsearchable are the judgments, O my God, in the sufferings of thy angel, John!

This single passage shows you, Christians, how opposite the judgments of God are to those of men. What the world generally esteems and applauds, is an abomination in the eyes of God; and what is most valuable in the eyes of God, is often an object of contempt in the opinion of men. No one ever possessed greater excellencies than John the Baptist, yet no one ever met with more cruelty or injustice from the world. On what account? Because he had the courage and resolution to discharge his duty in the public character of minister to the Most High God, and reproach Herod openly with living incestuously with his brother's wife. This was sufficient to exasperate that haughty and imperious prince to the highest degree, and draw upon himself the heaviest calamities. Herod, unable to bear the well-grounded reproach of John, ordered him immediately to be taken up, and thrown into a dark and loathsome place of confinement, loaded with iron chains. Had John the Baptist been governed by the maxims of the world, or, "the prudence of the flesh," as St. Paul calls it, he would have taken special care not to give the least offence to Herod, or expose himself to his resentment; but he was the minister

of God, governed by the Spirit of God, and, consequently, would discharge his duty at the risk of his liberty or of his life. When John suffered, innocence suffered; but being innocent, and more like an angel than a man, therefore he must suffer. All ye that are oppressed and laden, listen to that; listen to St. Paul—"all those who mean to live piously in Christ Jesus, will suffer persecution;" and again, he says of himself, "were I to please man, I should not be a servant of Christ." Great, indeed, should be the consolation of those who have the courage to oppose and rise up against the corrupted maxims of the world, that whilst they are hated, or even despised by man, they are in the greatest favour with Almighty God. For you will observe, that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ made it particularly his business to give John the Baptist the public praises and commendations his zeal deserved, setting him above not only all those whose rank entitled them to live at the courts of princes, but likewise above all the holy prophets that ever lived. Hence you may judge how much more reasonable, more equitable, and more advantageous it is to please the Almighty God, rather than mortal man. "Do not fear those," says Christ Jesus in the Gospel, "that kill the body, but rather fear him who can destroy both body and soul!"

You may imagine, perhaps, Christians, that the obligation of opposing sins that are scandalous or injurious to the honour and glory of God, is confined to the ministers of God alone. No; the same obligation extends to all the faithful in general, in many occurrences of life. "He that is not with me," says Christ Jesus, our Lord, "is against me;" and again, "He that doth not gather, scattereth." St. Paul declares, "that God gave every man his neighbour in charge." That is what divines call the obligation of fraternal correction, or the obligation we lie under of reprimanding our brethren, as often as they transgress the laws of God in our presence. In consequence of this obligation, we are all bound in conscience to correct those that live under our care, over whom we have any authority. Thus, a parent is always obliged to check and correct his children as often as they violate the laws of God in his presence; and a master, his domestics and servants. In virtue of the same obligation, we are likewise bound, in conscience, to reprimand our equals with decency, gentleness, and charity, should they do or advance anything before us, inconsistent with the principles of religion, moderation, or justice. We are further bound in conscience, even with regard to those of a superior rank, never to countenance or chime with their

sinful ways or discourse ; but rather show by our silence, or a certain seriousness, or even sternness in our looks, that we can by no means approve of their conduct and maxims. How far does this principle prevail in the world ? Is not the general maxim to let every man do as he pleases ; to create no enemies for ourselves ; to join with whatever company you are in, although the discourse were pointed at religion, at modesty, or the honour and reputation of a virtuous neighbour ? What can the end of such principles be ? We may hereby obtain the good-will of man ; but we certainly incur the displeasure of God, and not only incur his displeasure, but make ourselves liable to all the effects of his wrath.

St. John the Baptist was not satisfied with opposing everything that was injurious to the honour and glory of God, but likewise endeavoured to promote that glory to the utmost of his power. For, the moment he had heard of the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples to make a public inquiry about him, in order to have an opportunity of manifesting him unto the Jews, as the Messiah promised unto, and expected by the people of Israel. The question his disciples asked in public was this : “ Art thou he that is to come, or are we to expect another ? ” To which our Saviour answered, “ Go, and tell John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them.” This was telling them in reality, and all the multitude along with them, that he was the true Messiah ; as it clearly follows from these words, that he appeared in all the characters in which the Messiah had been represented by the Prophet Isaias, 35th chap.—“ Be ye comforted, and do not fear : behold God Himself shall come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf disclosed. Then the lame shall skip about and exult, as a light-footed deer. Then the tongue of the mute shall be loosened and set at liberty.” These were great and distinguishing marks indeed—marks that were plainly and visibly discernible in Christ Jesus, at that period, when he was performing the very works foretold by the prophet, before multitudes of people, even in the sight or hearing of all Judea. But what effect had the works upon those that were witnesses thereunto ? The disciples of John were convinced thereby that Christ Jesus was the true Messiah ; but the rest remained wilfully in their blindness : for which reason our blessed Saviour added these remarkable words—“ Happy is he that shall not be scandalized in me : ” happy is he who does not occasion, by his own prejudices, and

because I appear obscure in the eyes of the world, his own destruction, by rejecting me, or disavowing me, as the Redeemer of mankind! How was it possible the Jews could have mistaken, or could have refused to acknowledge Christ Jesus as the Redeemer of mankind? It was owing to their obstinacy, and the false notions they entertained of the Saviour promised unto Israel. For as the prophets had foretold that the Messiah would be great, and wise and powerful, and extend his empire to the remotest boundaries of the earth; which was only to be understood in a spiritual light, and of the spiritual empire which Christ Jesus was to obtain, by the Christian religion, over all the nations upon earth; the Jews, who were extremely terrestrial, understood those prophecies in a terrestrial light, and consequently expected the Messiah would come in all the power and glory of this world; and, by his superior power and glory, restore the kingdom of Israel to all its former splendour, and even carry it to a higher point of splendour than ever it had attained to before. This was their error and the source of their misfortunes. For when they could descry nothing in Christ Jesus of what they expected; when, instead of the great and mighty conqueror, and restorer of Israel, they could see nothing but a man, who had been bred, and who chose to live in obscurity and humiliation, they immediately rejected and disclaimed him publicly; which was rejecting and disclaiming him who was to be, chiefly and principally, the redemption and salvation of Israel, according to the promises made unto their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and next to Israel, the redemption and salvation of all mankind. "Happy is the man that shall not be scandalized in me."

How many, dear Christians, amongst ourselves, are daily scandalized in Christ Jesus? that is, that daily reject, I do not say himself, but his laws, his maxims, his examples? We willingly acknowledge him as the Saviour of the world; but do we willingly submit to the saving maxims of his holy laws—the maxims of humility, self-denial, self-disinterestedness, poverty of spirit, piety, and godliness, which he has laid down? Here we are scandalized in Christ, in neglecting these maxims. In this sense is Christ Jesus, even to many of his own disciples, a sign of contradiction. The cross of Christ, considered in this light, is no less a scandal to the Christians of our days, than it was formerly to the Jews. With pleasure we see Christ Jesus in his glorious transfiguration; but how reluctantly do we view him in the humiliations and ignominious scenes of his passion? With pleasure we hear him dis-

coursing of the eternal glory and happiness that are prepared for his faithful disciples in the kingdom of heaven ; but with what reluctance do we hear him preaching up the severe maxims of his law—"crucifying our flesh with all its concupiscences and sensual appetites?" One thing, however, is certain, Christians, mark me well, that we can never share in the redemption of Christ Jesus, if we be scandalized in him—if we refuse either to acknowledge him as our God and our Redeemer, or to follow and comply with the austere laws he has laid down for us ; because these are the conditions, the only necessary and indispensable conditions, on which he has promised his followers to make them for ever happy in the kingdom of heaven. It is of the last consequence, therefore, to us, to acknowledge Christ Jesus, and fulfil his holy laws and maxims ; because this, and this alone, will make him truly a Redeemer to us, by granting us forgiveness of our sins in this life, and eternal happiness in the next. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

FROM the many extraordinary things the Jews had heard of St. John the Baptist, some of them fancied he might be the Messiah promised unto Israel ; for which reason they sent him a solemn deputation, to know who he was, or what he was ; "whether it was he that was to come, or if they were expect another." To these different questions St. John made so many different answers, and told the deputies of the Jews, that he neither was the Messiah nor a prophet (for his humility was too great to consider himself in that light,) and that the Messiah promised unto Israel was no longer to be expected, inasmuch as "he was in reality amongst them although they knew him not!" The deputies of the synagogue, or head council of the Jews, still urged him to declare what he was : he made them this final answer—"I am the voice of one crying in the desert, make straight the ways of the Lord," as the prophet Isaiah said. Before Christ Jesus would vouchsafe to appear in his public character, and manifest himself unto the Jews, as the Messiah promised unto their forefathers, St. John the Baptist was commissioned, from heaven, to prepare his ways before him ; to announce unto the people that he would immediately appear, and to prepare and dispose their minds and hearts to acknowledge and receive him. What did this preparation consist in, with regard to the Jews ? In making straight the way of the Lord—in laying aside their prejudices,

their false and erroneous principles, and thereby to dispose themselves to follow faithfully the heavenly light that should shine before them.

This was the commission of St. John ; and as the Advent is intended to prepare us for the coming of Christ in his Nativity, the Church commissions her ministers to admonish the faithful of this day, in the words of John—"make straight the ways of the Lord ;" remove every obstacle that may prevent Christ Jesus from coming into our heart, and visiting us with his holy grace. The ways of the Lord are the ways that lead unto the Lord—truth, justice, and godliness. These ways are essentially straight in themselves ; but these ways, essentially straight and direct in themselves, may, and not only may, but frequently are, rendered crooked and oblique by our own perverseness—by the false and erroneous principles we adopt, and the sinful ways we pursue. These obstacles, therefore, Christians, it is necessary to remove, in order to make straight the ways of the Lord, or in order to enter into the ways that lead directly unto the Lord. Whilst we follow false and erroneous principles, it is plain we abandon the ways of truth ; and whilst we follow sinful ways, it is plain we abandon the ways of justice ; consequently, we abandon the straight and direct ways of the Lord. Therefore, to rectify our ways, or make straight the ways of the Lord, it is necessary we lay aside the false principles we follow, and forsake the sinful ways we pursue : otherwise Christ Jesus will never visit us with his holy grace, nor make us partakers of eternal happiness. But what are these false and erroneous principles that render the ways of the Lord, which are essentially straight and direct in themselves, crooked and oblique ? 1st. Principles of worldliness. The first way of the Lord is that fundamental law and maxim of Christ Jesus—"Seek the kingdom of heaven before all things." Did we pursue steadily this first, straight, and unerring way of the Lord, we should reject and despise all the interests of the world the moment they come in competition with our salvation, and decline any advantage that could be compassed but by a crime. In opposition to this first essential principle of religion, people generally set up another, which is this—to make the most of the world ; to employ their whole time in increasing their fortune, although, in the meantime, they should entirely neglect the care of their salvation ; to embrace every offer fortune may throw in their way, though ever so sinful in the execution. The same might be said of the spirit of pride, the spirit of ambition, the spirit of sensuality and revenge, which reign universally in the

world, than which nothing can be more opposite to the humility, self-denial, and forgiveness, which are strictly enjoined by the laws of Christ. Therefore, to prepare our souls for the coming of the Lord, it is necessary we forsake the distorted ways in which our passions have engaged us, and return to the plain and direct ways that infallibly lead to heaven. 2nd. What renders the ways of the Lord distorted and oblique is a false conscience, or a principle by which many people endeavour to justify unto themselves what is really criminal in the eyes of God. This is undoubtedly the most dreadful situation in which any one can be placed. While one's conscience is clear, and, if I may say, enlightened, when he accounts that right which is really right, and that sinful which is really sinful, there is no reason to despair of his salvation, as he may repent one time or other, and return sincerely unto the Lord ; but there can be no hopes of that person, whose conscience is false and erroneous, or of the man who persuades himself that a thing is lawful, which is really criminal and unwarrantable in the eyes of God. For, as knowing and acknowledging our faults is the very first step to repentance, it is plain that man can never repent, who neither knows nor acknowledges his faults, nor, consequently, can have any expectation of eternal happiness. "If thine eye be clear," says our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, "thy whole body will be enlightened ; but if thine eye be dark, thy whole body will be darkened." Now the eye of the soul is conscience, as it is conscience that directs the soul in her operations, by pointing out what is right and what is wrong. If, therefore, this conscience be dark, or governed by erroneous principles, it is plain nothing but works of darkness, and, consequently, works of perdition, can ensue !

But is it enough to excuse any man in the eyes of God, that he thinks his own actions and principles lawful and just ? No ; it is not. For the wise man declares, "there is a way which seemeth straight unto man, yet endeth in perdition ;" and the reason why it should be so is this, that the rectitude or lawfulness of our actions doth not depend entirely on our own thoughts or notions, but rather on their conformity with the laws of God ; if, therefore, our actions be not conformable to the laws of God, we are certainly criminal in his sight, let our own thoughts of them be ever so favourable. Is it not enough, I say again, that a man thinks his own actions and principles lawful and just ? No, Christians, it is not. Because there is a false and erroneous conscience, as well as a right and clear conscience : therefore, the testimony of conscience is

not always an infallible rule. Were conscience always governed by reason and religion, then, indeed, it should be a true and unerring guide. But as it is pliable into any shape or form, frequently biased by prejudice, and often warped by interest, insomuch, that we frequently and easily convince ourselves, that whatever we earnestly wish for is just and holy. St. Augustine says, "The testimony of conscience is, upon many occasions, a false and destructive guide." How then shall a man know when his conscience is right, and the testimony of his conscience to be depended on? It is thus: when the testimony of his conscience is conformable to the maxims of Christ, and the doctrine of the Church of Christ. For a further explanation of this principle, which is undoubtedly one of the most considerable and most extensive principles of religion, you must observe the law of Christ contains manifold obligations, all essential in their respective kinds. Some are so very clear, and easy to be understood, as to need no explanation; others are more difficult and obscure in their nature. As for the clear and manifest obligations of the law, there is no one of any reason but sees when and how far they oblige in conscience; but of the deeper and more intricate points of the law, every man is not a competent judge. Here, or in points of this kind, it is necessary to have recourse to, and consult the doctors of the Church, as appears from the words of Christ Jesus in the Gospel—"the Scribes and Pharisees are seated upon the chair of Moses; do ye, therefore, observe what they say or deliver unto you."

If, therefore, Christians, in the material transactions of life, where the law of God may interfere and come in question, people neglect consulting the masters in Israel—the doctors of the Church; or if designedly, they consult such as they think are ready and willing from their ignorance, complaisance, or any private interest, to favour or indulge their passions; if, in fine, any man undertake to set up his own private opinion in opposition to the opinion of the Church, with regard to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of any practice, that man is certainly reprov'd in the eyes of God, and must be ever excluded from the glory of heaven, because, as St. John says, "he had loved darkness more than light."

What has a man of this character to do? To make straight his ways in the presence of the Lord; to adopt no other principles but those of Christ; to follow no other ways but the ways of Christ; to be governed by no other opinion but the opinion of the Church of Christ. It will avail a man nothing at the tribunal of Christ, that he fancied he was

doing right, while he was actually transgressing the most material points of the law. Will not Christ Jesus object upon that occasion, that he was not his own guide; inasmuch as there were teachers, and doctors, and pastors established in his Church, as St. Paul declares, to direct and instruct him in the ways of heaven? Will he not make him sensible, that if he fancied he was doing right, it was owing to an excessive and passionate love of the world, which blinded him so far as to hinder him from seeing the light, or taken any pains to discover it? Will he not reproach him with having been ever afraid of discovering the truth, lest he should be thereby disturbed in his criminal practices, or thereby deprived of a share of the perishable interests of this world? Will he not convince him, that as often as he was told the truth by the ministers of Christ, either in public or private, he rejected it with disdain, always preferring his own private erroneous opinion, to the general, true, and unerring opinion of the Church of Christ; because his own erroneous opinion favoured his interest and his passions, whilst the other condemned both the one and the other, as they were entirely inconsistent with the true interests of his soul? This is certainly what will pass one day, at the tribunal of Christ, with regard to those whose ways are not straight in the presence of the Lord. Let us, therefore, beseech the Almighty to renew a spirit of rectitude within our bowels; a spirit of truth; a spirit of docility and fidelity to the law; a spirit that may induce us to prepare effectually the ways of the Lord, by removing every obstacle to salvation, and fulfilling faithfully every duty, the observance whereof is necessary towards attaining the possession of eternal happiness in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

As the Advent was instituted by the Church to prepare the faithful for the coming of Christ Jesus in his Nativity, so it ends or closes with that part of the Gospel which announces the approaching Nativity of Christ: "Every one shall see the salvation sent from God." Now, this happened, Christians, when the only begotten Son of God was born visibly amongst us, for the redemption and salvation of mankind. This was the happy period foretold by the prophets, which was to draw down the greatest blessings upon mankind in general. This was the happy period all the holy patriarchs and saints of the Old Law had been wishing and longing for, with the most

vehement desires ; frequently calling upon the heavens to open and the holy one to come down—"the expectation of nations and the desire of mankind."

What necessity, Christians, was there for a Messiah or a Redeemer? To conceive this point, which is, undoubtedly, the foundation and ground-work of religion, you must know that Almighty God, after creating the first parents of all mankind, assured them that they and their posterity should be made completely and eternally happy in the kingdom of heaven, after enjoying many great and considerable blessings upon earth for some time, provided they proved faithful to his divine laws ; which laws were then no other than the worship and love due to the Divine Majesty, and abstaining from the forbidden fruit ; which laws of worship and love were engraved in their hearts, and the law of abstaining from the forbidden fruit expressly and positively specified unto them. Had they continued faithful unto God, he would undoubtedly have fulfilled his promise unto them ; but as they transgressed his laws, they lost and forfeited every title to the promise which had been made to them. In consequence of this forfeiture, Adam and Eve, and all their guilty posterity, were excluded for ever from the happiness they had been destined for ; and also condemned to the severest punishments—to sickness, sufferings, death, and to all the evils and calamities of this life. These were the deplorable effects of one sin : and in this condition they must have remained for ever, had not Almighty God, in his great mercy, promised unto Adam a Saviour, by whose merits they should not only be redeemed from sin, and the penalties of sin, but, likewise, restored to their former privileges and right to eternal happiness. It was not in the power of man, weak, imperfect, and sinful as he was, to make the proper satisfaction or atonement for the injury the Divine Majesty had received in the violation of his laws—No. As the injury was infinitely great, it could not properly be atoned for but by a mediator of infinite merit. As the injury was offered to the Most Sacred Majesty of God, it required the interposition of no less than the Son of God, to make a full and complete satisfaction—such a satisfaction as God the Father could not refuse accepting.

But could not Adam and Eve have repented after their fall, and thereby have obtained forgiveness from Almighty God? No, Christians, they could not ; because repentance derives all its efficacy, all its merits, from the merits of Christ, and the promise Almighty God had made of granting forgiveness upon repentance, through the merits of Christ. If,

therefore, a Redeemer had not been promised, repentance could have been of no value or significance unto man. But this Redeemer, so necessary for the reparation of the injury that had been offered to God in the violation of his laws, and so necessary for the reparation of the many great and considerable evils which had fallen upon man and his posterity for ever, in consequence of his first transgression or prevarication, the Almighty was most graciously pleased to promise, immediately after the fall of Adam and Eve; for, addressing the serpent who had seduced Eve to violate and transgress the divine command, he said, "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; and she shall bruise thy head to pieces." That is, of a woman should be born a Redeemer, who should destroy the power and empire of the infernal spirit who had tempted Eve under the form of a serpent, and had been thereby instrumental to the ruin and destruction of mankind. The same promise was renewed to Abraham, after the Almighty had chosen him for the father and head of a large people, who should serve him in spirit and truth, with this additional circumstance, that the Messiah should be born of his race; for the Lord assured him, all nations of the earth shall be blessed in him—in the Messiah, who was to be one of his descendants. It was further renewed to Jacob, grandson of Abraham, with some general indications of the time when the Messiah was to appear. For this patriarch, after giving his blessing at his death unto his children, was seized by a prophetic spirit, and said "The sceptre," or supreme power, "shall not be taken out of the tribe of Juda, nor shall a commander be wanting in his race, till he that is to be sent (the Messiah) shall come; and he shall be the expectation of nations." From this prophecy it appears that the Messiah was to come when the sceptre, or supreme power, should be no longer in the house or tribe of Juda. This was exactly the case when Christ appeared on earth; for then the supreme power was not in the house or tribe of Juda, or in the hands of any Jew, but in the hands of a stranger—of Herod, who was an Idumean, an alien, and who, though no Jew, yet was made king of Judea by the Romans, who had conquered it under Pompey the Great,

The same great and important promise of a Messiah, or Redeemer, was renewed in all the prophecies from age to age, but especially in that of Daniel, during the captivity in Babylon. After the Jews had abandoned the Almighty and the observance of his holy laws, he gave them up a prey to their enemy, the king of Babylon, who, after a long and oppressive

war, took and destroyed Jerusalem and its temple, and led the Jews and their king captives to Babylon, where they remained in captivity seventy-two years. During this period—a period of severity and punishment—the Almighty did not entirely forget his people; as he sent prophets to comfort them, to animate their courage, and keep alive their expectations of a deliverance. Among these was the prophet Daniel, who frequently assured them their captivity should soon be at an end, and advised them to prepare the roads for their return to Jerusalem, the only object of their ardent wishes, as it was the holy city to which Almighty God was pleased to grant a special protection, and where he held a visible converse or intercourse with his own people. With a view to their immediate return to Jerusalem, the prophet admonished the Jews to prepare the roads beforehand, saying, “Every hill shall be levelled, and every valley shall be filled up,” as we read in the Gospel of this day; which passage is taken word for word out of the prophet, Daniel. He was not content with assuring the Jews they should soon be released from their captivity in Babylon, but, likewise, signified to them the time of the redemption promised unto Israel, of which their deliverance from the captivity of Babylon was only a figure. In his 9th chap., the prophet says, “Before seventy weeks (in the language of Scripture, a week here means seven years) are expired, there shall be an end of prevarication and sin; iniquity shall be destroyed; the eternal justice shall come into the world; the prophecies shall be fulfilled; and the Holy of Holies shall be anointed.” This term of years, foretold by the prophet, agrees exactly with the time wherein Christ Jesus appeared in the world, as all chronologers are agreed.

From the whole history of religion, it appears that the belief and expectation of a Redeemer was the most essential and fundamental point of religion from the very beginning of the world. As now there is no salvation to be expected but by believing the Messiah is come, so, likewise, there was no salvation before the coming of Christ, but by believing he was to come, and fulfilling the law—the law of reason, or the law of nature, until the time of Moses; and by fulfilling from his time, the written, or Mosaic law, until the coming of Christ, who instituted and established the New Law or dispensation. As now we expect and obtain salvation by believing the Messiah is come, and fulfilling his holy laws; so likewise, before the coming of Christ, salvation was expected and obtained by believing the Messiah was to come. This is,

certainly the most beautiful, the most instructive, and the most comfortable part of our holy religion, from which two things are to be inferred : first, to be extremely thankful to Almighty God for having granted to mankind, even in preference to the angels, who were involved in like guilt and misfortunes, a divine Redeemer, by whose merits we have been redeemed from the bondage of Satan, which our first parents brought upon their whole race, and which they must for ever have continued in, had not our Divine Redeemer, Christ Jesus, come forward, and, by his sufferings and death, reconciled mankind with his father, by atoning or satisfying for their guilt. Secondly, to take especial care not to defeat or frustrate the merciful views of God, by neglecting to fulfil the conditions he requires at our hands—the observance of his holy laws ; for although we are all truly redeemed in Christ, yet we will not all be partakers of the entire benefits of our redemption in Christ—eternal happiness ; because this eternal happiness is not promised to all those that are redeemed, but to those who, after being redeemed, shall fulfil the law, or, after transgressing some points of the law, shall sincerely repent and return unto the Lord. For this end, and for this alone, was St. John the Baptist ordered from heaven before Christ Jesus would appear publicly in the world, to go and preach the baptism of penance unto the people ; to exhort them strenuously to repentance, assuring them that as their bodies were cleansed and purified by him in the waters of the river Jordan, so their sins should be washed away in the presence of the Lord by repentance, through the merits of the Messiah, who was immediately to make his appearance amongst them.

Hence, divines conclude there are but two ways of attaining eternal happiness—the way of innocence, and the way of repentance. The way of innocence belongs to those who, after baptism, depart this life, having retained their baptismal innocence to the end. But the way of repentance is the common and general way ; because there are very few, if any at all, who die in possession of the innocence they acquired in their baptism, after attaining the use of reason. This is, therefore, the way we should all pursue. It is the only way open for us to attain the possession of heaven. But let us remember that repentance necessarily implies three things : the first, a true and sincere sorrow for having offended Almighty God for the past ; an application to the sacrament of penance, accompanied by a change of life for the present ; and a firm resolution for the time to come, of never offending

Almighty God, by transgressing mortally any one of his laws, for any consideration, or upon any account whatever. Without these conditions there can be no true repentance; nor, consequently, any pretensions to share in the redemption of Christ. On the other hand, if we level every hill; if we break down our passions, and reduce them to the obedience of God's holy law; if we fill up every valley; if, by our future good works (works of patience, works of charity, works of meekness and humility,) we manifest our sincere love of God, and sorrow for having ever offended him, we shall assuredly partake in the full benefits of the redemption of Christ Jesus, our Lord—mercy here, and eternal mercies, eternal joys and blessings hereafter. Amen.

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST.

ALTHOUGH Almighty God was pleased to promise a Redeemer to mankind, by whose merits they should be saved from sin, and the eternal punishments due to sin, and likewise restored to their primitive right to the kingdom of heaven, immediately after the fall of our first parents; yet the promise was not fulfilled, or carried into execution, until many ages after it was made, that all mankind might thereby become sensible of their own misery and weakness, and wish with greater eagerness for the Redeemer they expected.

It was “in the plenitude of time,” as St. Paul expresses it—that is, when the complete time was come of showing mercy unto mankind, that the only begotten Son of God was born in Bethlehem, a little town near Jerusalem, after taking human nature upon him in the womb of the blessed Virgin, through the operation of the Holy Ghost.

Augustus Cæsar, the Roman emperor, having published an edict, that all the subjects of the empire should be enrolled, the Jews (whose country, Judea, was then a Roman province) were obliged to obey the law; conformably to which Mary, and Joseph, her reputed husband, travelled in the midst of winter, from Nazareth, a little town in Galilee, where they lived, to Bethlehem, to give in their names, and be enrolled. It was here that Mary brought forth the Son of God, and Redeemer of mankind, in a deserted and obscure stable, whither she was obliged to repair, there being no room, the Gospel says, in the inns or public-houses of the town, which were all occupied by the multitudes that came to have their names registered according to the emperor's command.

Can anything, Christians, be more astonishing than to see the Maker of heaven, and Lord of all things, the Son of God, and Redeemer of mankind, reduced to dwell in a dark and obscure stable at his very first appearance in the world? He that fills the heavens with his glory, is now confined to a most miserable habitation! Is this owing to chance or design? Undoubtedly it was intended for our instruction and improvement, as we shall shortly see. In the meantime, Almighty God was not wanting to manifest the unequalled greatness of his Son, even while he lay unnoticed, and, as if abandoned, in a most despicable retreat; for we read in the Gospel of this day, that, "while certain shepherds were watching their flocks by night, they perceived a heavenly light spreading and diffusing itself around, which filled them with fear and apprehensions. Then the angel of the Lord said unto them, 'Fear not; for, behold I bring unto you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people, because this day is born to you a Saviour who is CHRIST THE LORD, in the city of David; and this shall be a sign unto you, you shall find an infant wrapt in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.'" Immediately after these words, was heard a melodious concert of celestial spirits in the air, giving praise to God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heavens, and on earth peace to men of good will."

What notion, Christians, must these happy shepherds have conceived of the new born infant they were informed of, from the extraordinary appearance to which they had been witnesses? And what must that infant be whose birth the very powers of heaven were ordered to publish to mankind in the most solemn manner, and with the greatest demonstrations of joy? As soon as the angels departed, the shepherds said unto each other, "Let us go as far as Bethlehem, and see this WORD which was made, and which the Lord hath shown unto us; and actually they went with speed, and found Mary and Joseph, and the INFANT laid in a manger."

It is easy to conceive the awful and religious sentiments which must have arisen in the hearts of those shepherds the moment they perceived the infant Jesus, laid in the very situation that angels had described. With what joy did they behold the infant God, who was one day to release them from the slavery of sin, the everlasting torments of hell, to make them partakers of all the joys and glory of the kingdom of heaven! With what gratitude did they acknowledge the extraordinary favour that was shown them, in particular, as being the first of mankind informed of the birth of the Redeemer of mankind!

But, the better to conceive these sentiments, let us go, in spirit, to Bethlehem, with the shepherds mentioned in the Gospel of this day, and "behold the WORD that was made"—"The Word of God made flesh," for the salvation of mankind. Let us humbly adore, in spirit, the Son of God, upon his appearance in the world, and consider, attentively, the infinite bounty of God, who, though infinitely happy in himself, from his own essential and eternal felicity, was pleased to come down from heaven and take our nature upon him, to enable him to suffer and die, and, by suffering and dying on the cross, reconcile mankind with his Almighty Father, and thereby entitle them to the possession of heaven, whence they were excluded since the fall and prevarication of the first parent of mankind.

Such consideration must necessarily inspire that gratitude and love for Christ Jesus, which seem peculiar to the mystery of his birth; for, of all the mysteries of his life, this is the most moving, the most endearing, the most capable of inspiring the greatest confidence and love. Also, where he appears in the character of a God, the splendour of his miracles, the divine majesty that always shone forth in his appearance and actions, are apter to create the greatest awe and veneration than confidence and love. But in his nativity, he appears, in some measure, divested of the divinity, and under such forms and circumstances as must encourage the most timorous souls—solitude, obscurity, infancy, and weakness! Let us, therefore, Christians, confidently approach this infant God in his cradle, and after adoring him in spirit, as the Son of God and Saviour of the world, humbly beseech him to be a Saviour unto ourselves. It is for our salvation he is born. Our salvation will, likewise, be the happy fruit of his birth, provided we comply with the instructions he has given us even in his birth.

For Christ Jesus, even in his cradle, preaches aloud, as the holy fathers observe, with a strong, persuasive, though silent voice, the great, important, and saving truths he afterwards delivered publicly unto the world—namely, humility, self-denial, and poverty of spirit. And, first, what can be more remarkable than the humility of Christ Jesus, even in his very birth? Master, as he was, of the whole creation, he could have easily chosen the most noble palace, or splendid habitation, for the place of his birth. He was better pleased to come into the world in a deserted and obscure stable, without the least show, figure, or ostentation; in order, undoubtedly, to cure us of a certain spirit of pride and ambition which

reigns universally in the world, and makes people set the greatest value upon the honours and distinctions of this life, which are of little or no value in themselves, and most commonly, the greatest obstacle in their salvation. From his cradle, therefore, does Jesus cry aloud, as he did afterwards in his public character, "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart." What an instance of self-denial and mortification did Christ Jesus exhibit even in his birth! Every circumstance must undoubtedly have added to his sufferings upon this occasion:—the inclemency of the season, the depth of winter, the hour of midnight—as the Scripture says, while the night was rolling on, in the very midst of her rapid course, the Omnipotent Word of God broke forth from the celestial seats above, and appeared in human nature upon earth; and to this the many hardships he must have laboured under at that tender age, from the very situation of the open, bleak, and miserable stable in which he was born. How justly, then, could this Divine Redeemer preach up afterwards self-denial unto his disciples, saying, "If any one will be my disciple, let him deny himself," after he had himself thus practised the greatest self-denial and abnegation, from the very first moment of his life!

What poverty did Christ Jesus appear in at his first coming into this world! Was he not pleased to see himself deprived, upon this occasion, of the most necessary accommodations—such accommodations as the poorest people upon earth are entitled to, and generally supplied with? Mary could not find room in the inn, the Gospel says, and not finding room, she is obliged to retire to the first place she met with, which was no other than a stable! Here she brings forth the Son of God, the Redeemer of mankind. But from the very nature and situation of the place, what want and necessities must have ensued! All the place could supply was—a bad covering, a poor manger, and a slender portion of straw. These were all the riches the Son of God possessed on his entrance into the world! For which reason St. Paul says, "He that was rich by nature, made himself poor, for the love of mankind."

Christ Jesus was not only pleased to come poor into the world, but has likewise made poverty sacred in his person, as the holy fathers observe. For who was it, Christians, the Almighty God first informed of the birth of Christ? The poor shepherds that were watching their flocks during the night; and they, in preference to all the great, and rich, and opulent men that were then living upon the earth. Who was

it, besides, that Christ Jesus promised his kingdom to in a most particular manner? The poor: for he says, "Happy are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Finally, what is the condition, the essential condition Christ Jesus requires of his disciples to entitle them to the kingdom of heaven? Poverty of spirit: for he says, in the Gospel, "No one can be my disciple, that will not renounce all that he has." Not, in fact, by throwing away his substance, or fortune, but by renouncing it in spirit; that is, by disengaging his heart and affections from all the wealth and riches in the world.

But how far do these examples and maxims of Christ Jesus prevail in the world? Notwithstanding the real poverty in which he was born, notwithstanding the poverty of spirit he commands and requires, is it not the riches and wealth of this world that even the Christians of our days are mostly desirous of, and labour for with the greatest application and eagerness of desire?

Notwithstanding, it must be admitted, as St. Bernard argues upon this subject, that either Christ Jesus or the world is mistaken—but it can never be supposed that Christ Jesus, who is the essential and eternal wisdom of God, can be mistaken, therefore it must be the world that is mistaken in the value men set upon, and the indefatigable ardour with which they pursue, the wealth and riches of this world. One single view of the stable in which Christ Jesus was born, the shreds with which he was covered, and the manger wherein he was laid, proved this truth to a demonstration. Let us, therefore, learn from the example of Christ Jesus, even in his birth, to rectify the false notions of the world, and adopt the notions and maxims of Christ. Let us never forget that this divine Redeemer was, in his nativity a complete pattern of humility, self-denial, and poverty of spirit, which are the fundamental virtues of Christianity. Let us not only learn to know and distinguish those great and necessary virtues, but likewise practise them in imitation of Christ. If we do, we may justly say, with the Angel of the Lord, "There is a Saviour born unto us, who is Christ our Lord;" by whose merits we shall be saved from sin, the punishment due to sin, and likewise put in possession of the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

THE CIRCUMCISION.

As this is, Christians, one of the greatest festivals of the year, a festival dictated to the name of Christ Jesus, it is very proper we should inquire into and be informed of everything relating thereto. Now what chiefly concerns this festival is contained in the Gospel of this day, which tells that "when eight days were ended, the child was circumcised, and the name of Jesus given unto him." But what was circumcision? It was the first ceremony among the Jews, instituted by God himself, when he directed Abraham to circumcise himself, his family, and all his posterity, as an everlasting mark of the covenant he had made with him; for we read in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis these remarkable words, "and God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant, thou, and thy seed after thee, in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee: every man child among you shall be circumcised; and he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you. And my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant." From these words it appears 1st—that circumcision was ordained by Almighty God; 2ndly—that it regarded the male children alone, who were to be circumcised eight days after they were born;—3dly,—that it was a token of strict alliance which Almighty God was pleased to contract with Abraham and his posterity; insomuch, that without circumcision, no one was looked on as of the chosen people of God; for the Almighty adds these words in the same chapter, "and the uncircumcised male child, whose flesh is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from my people; he hath broken my covenant."

Now, Christians, as it was a point of obligation of the law to be circumcised, Christ Jesus (who came not to dissolve the law, but to fulfil it, even to the least tittle, as he declares himself in the Gospel) would not but submit to the law of circumcision; for which reason, we read in this day's Gospel, that after the eight days were over, the child was circumcised, and his name called Jesus.

As in the New Law, or dispensation, it is customary to give names unto children at their baptism, so it was in the Old Law at the time of circumcision; for which reason the Son of God had his name likewise given him at that time. But what name, Christians? The most august name that ever was—a name dictated by an angel before he was born—a name so venerable, St. Paul says, "that every knee shall bend at the

sound thereof, of those who are in heaven, on earth, and in hell," that is, the most holy name of Jesus ! But what does the name of Jesus signify ? It signifies a Saviour, or Redeemer. Why was the name of Jesus, or Saviour of mankind, given to Christ in his circumcision, since the salvation of mankind was to be wrought upon the cross ? For the strongest reasons imaginable : 1st—Because it was Christ Jesus that truly saved us and redeemed us from the slavery of sin, and the eternal punishments due to sin ; 2nd—Because by submitting to circumcision, he contracted an obligation of dying for the redemption of mankind ; for, whoever was circumcised became a debtor to the law, and put himself under an obligation of fulfilling the whole law, as St. Paul declares in the 5th chapter of his epistle to the Galatians. Now the law could not be fulfilled but by the oblation of the body and blood of Christ upon the cross—for which reason his last dying words were these—"Now all is fulfilled ;" therefore Christ Jesus, by submitting to the law of circumcision, contracted an obligation of dying for the salvation of mankind. 3rd—Christ Jesus not only contracted an obligation, in his circumcision, of saving mankind, but likewise put himself in the immediate and necessary dispositions of becoming a victim for them ; for, in order to save mankind, it was necessary to make unto the Almighty God a full reparation for the injury he had received in the violation of his law ; it was necessary his justice should be satisfied and appeased. But this no sinner, no creature, nothing less than a God, could do, because he alone could offer a satisfaction worthy of a God. This is the reason why Christ Jesus submits to the law of circumcision ; for as that was the mark of sin, in the Old Law, Christ Jesus by undergoing that ceremony, took on him the appearance of sin, that he might, in that character, be able to offer himself a victim for all the sins of mankind, and endure the punishments they deserved. 4th—Christ Jesus, in his circumcision, began in effect, to act the part of a Saviour, by shedding a part of his blood for the redemption of mankind. This followed from the very nature of the operation, wherein a part of his flesh was cut away, which was necessarily attended with an effusion of blood ; so that the first drops that were spilled of his blood in the circumcision, were an earnest of his shedding the rest upon the cross. With what gratitude then should we call to mind that mystery which was the commencement of our redemption ! Another great advantage we derive from the circumcision of Christ is, that this painful ceremony was abolished thereby

so as to subsist no longer in the New Law ; for St. Paul says in the 5th chapter of his epistle to the Galatians, " If you be circumcised, Christ will avail you nothing ; in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything, but faith, which worketh by charity." Our circumcision is baptism in Christ Jesus—for St. Paul says in the 2nd chapter to the Colossians, " You are circumcised with a circumcision not made with the hand, by taking away the bodily flesh, but with the circumcision of Christ, buried together with him in baptism." Therefore what circumcision signified in the Old Law, baptism effects in the New, and that with its full degree of perfection, as by virtue of the sacrament, people of all nations and all conditions are regenerated in Christ, made children of God, and heirs to the kingdom of heaven.

5th—It is, however, necessary to observe, that Christ Jesus, in his circumcision, abolished only the exterior performance of this ceremony ; for the inward circumcision, or circumcision of the heart, remains still an indispensable obligation in the New Law : for our Saviour says, " If any one will be my disciple, let him deny himself ;" and St. Paul, in his 3rd chapter to the Philippians, " We are the circumcision, who serve God in spirit." Therefore there is a circumcision subsisting in the New Law, which consists in serving God in spirit. Even in the Old Law, the bare circumcision of the flesh availeth nothing, without the spirit thereof, as appears from St. Paul, in his 2nd chapter to the Romans, " He is not a Jew who is so outwardly ; nor is that circumcision, which is outwardly done in the flesh ; but he is a Jew who is so inwardly ; and that is circumcision, which is of the heart, in the spirit, and not according to the letter." This is the meaning, Christians, of these remarkable words in the 30th chapter of Deuteronomy : " The Lord will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart." What we should therefore propose to ourselves from the consideration of this mystery is, " to circumcise ourselves unto the Lord," as the Prophet Jeremy said unto the Jews, " and cut away the uncircumcision of our hearts ;" that is, to retrench every vicious affection, every irregular appetite of the mind, otherwise we can have no share in the circumcision of Christ, nor, consequently, in the fruits of his sufferings and redemption.

6th—But what does the circumcision of the heart consist in ? First in refusing ourselves every unlawful pleasure ; and secondly, in denying ourselves frequently the most lawful pleasures, in order to lower the passions, strengthen our virtue, and make ourselves conformable, in some measure, to Jesus

Christ, our glorious head, and the pattern of all the elect. "Those who are of Christ," St. Paul says to the Galatians, "have crucified their flesh, with its vices and lusts." It is this crucifying of the flesh, or this circumcision of the heart, that we must endeavour at and compass in reality, if we entertain any desires of the kingdom of God. A resolution of this kind may be disagreeable to the corruption of our nature, which is always prone to sensual pleasures; but what should reconcile it to our thoughts is, that it is absolutely necessary, and that it is nothing to what Christ Jesus suffered for us in his circumcision. In fine, when we see this infant God undergoing the most painful operation, and at that period of life, when the delicacy of his constitution must have greatly added to every sensation of pain; and all this for our salvation, can we refuse, Christians, to submit to every severity of the law? No. Let us rather always bear about in our bodies, as St. Paul says to the Corinthians, the mortification of Christ, that the life of Christ may be made manifest in our bodies. If we do, we may justly expect that after denying ourselves a few insignificant pleasures upon earth, we shall be admitted one day into the everlasting joys of the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE festival mentioned in the beginning of this day's Gospel, which Joseph, Mary, and the child Jesus went up to celebrate at Jerusalem, when he was twelve years old, was the great festival of the Pasche or Passover. As this great festival had been instituted in commemoration of the deliverance of the Jews from their slavery in Egypt, and as their deliverance was held in the greatest veneration among the Jews, it was performed with the greatest solemnity imaginable. It lasted seven entire days, and was always celebrated with a prodigious concourse of people. No one that had any regard to the law, any sentiment of religion, or any gratitude for the blessings of heaven, would be absent during this great and memorable solemnity.

Upon one of these occasions, the holy family of Nazareth, who were extremely remarkable for their godliness and punctual observance of the law, "went up to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the festival," the Gospel says, "with the child Jesus who was then twelve years old." After spending the time prescribed by the law, in the religious

exercises of offering up sacrifices unto the Lord, and hearing the law read and expounded in the Temple, they returned towards their home, "but the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and his parents knew it not." For, imagining him in the company of the group wherewith he travelled, one day's journey was made before they missed him. After searching in vain amongst their kindred and acquaintances, they return sorrowful, to Jerusalem, where, for three days, they continued the search; and at length led by the finger of God to the Temple, there the astonished parents find him (Jos. lib. 7), seated, surrounded by the rabbies or doctors of the law, listening to and proposing unto them questions.

What an awful sight was this, Christians, to see a child discoursing, at the age of twelve, upon the most sublime and important points of the law, in presence of the most learned men of the synagogue! And what an opinion must the assembly have conceived of his riper years, from the immense knowledge and penetration which shined forth at that tender age in all his words! The Gospel says, "that all those that heard him were astonished at his wisdom and answers."

You are to observe, Christians, that the wisdom and knowledge of Christ Jesus did not grow up with his years, nor receive any gradual increase from his advancing in age—No; this is the condition of created and imperfect beings, who never attain the perfection of their nature but by slow degrees and successive advances. With Christ Jesus it was quite otherwise: As he was the Son of God, and the plenitude of the divinity residing within him, according to the expression of St. Paul, from the very first moment of his incarnation, he was at all times possessed of all the wisdom of the divinity. But this wisdom he was pleased to conceal, and only manifested some slender sketches of it, from time to time, during his private life, until he should appear in his public character, and then display the wisdom of his godhead, by the lustre of his miracles and the sublimity and irreprehensibility of his doctrine. Therefore, when the Gospel says, that as he "increased in age," he likewise "increased in wisdom," we are to understand thereby that he was pleased to give more frequent and more remarkable proofs of the infinite wisdom he was possessed of from the beginning. But the Gospel says, "he increased in grace." Here, O Christians! is the chief source of our instruction, the great model we should propose unto ourselves, in our deportment and conduct. Happy indeed would it have been, did the world allow us to discover an increase of grace with an increase of years among the little

ones we behold in the streets of the city ! Carrying about them, in their form and endowments, the beautiful work of God, they scarcely know there is a God, but are conversant in the vices of our unhappy nature. Soon as they reach the use of speech, the thoughtless parent studies more to indulge the wandering fancies of their unhappy nature, than impress their tender hearts with the love of discipline, and a pious veneration of that Almighty Being for whom alone they were made ! In proportion as they advance in years, do they "increase in virtue?" No. The child at twelve years of age, knows no law, but his liberty, no God but his immoral parents, who by their negligence and evil example, make one universal wreck of themselves and their unhappy posterity ? Beware, Christians : time rolls on without interruption : last year is past, the present is on the wing, the end of which no man can promise to himself. Where is the man that even purposes within himself to lead this year a more Christian life than he did the year before ? Where is he that during any one year lays aside any one evil practice ?

Behold, Christians, in Mary and Joseph, a beautiful model for parents, who are too apt to look upon their children with the eyes of the flesh, that is, with the sentiments of nature, without any regard to religion or the order of Divine Providence. What they chiefly are anxious for, is, to behold their children esteemed or regarded in public, and placed in the prosperous conditions of the world. But what they should be mostly solicitous about, is to see them educated in the love and fear of God, and formed with such principles as may qualify and enable them to answer the views of Providence in the different stations of life. Any accident that happens a beloved child, any misfortune that may befall him, is enough to throw the parent into the deepest affliction ; but should this darling child be unacquainted with the most essential duties of religion, should he prove extremely careless and negligent in his duties to God, it does not give the parents the smallest concern ! Why so ? Because they always act from the sentiments of flesh and blood alone, without once consulting the principles of religion. Were they governed by the Spirit of God, they certainly would take care that their children should be frequently employed in the things that concern their Heavenly Father, the great and universal parent of mankind.

After the child Jesus had made his parents sensible of their error, he went home along with them, the Gospel says, "and was subject unto them." Can anything, Christians, be more

astonishing than to see the Maker of heaven and earth, and Lord of all things—the Ruler of rulers, and King of kings—subject himself to the power and government of Joseph and Mary, not for a few days, or a few months, but for many long years! What an instance of humility and obedience is this! There is nothing sits heavier on the mind of man, than subjection of any kind; but what should make the greatest subjection easy, is the example of Christ. He was master of all, and consequently, had an undoubted right to command; yet he would obey, because it was the will and appointment of Heaven. From a principle of religion, therefore, let us submit to the subjection we lie under in the different conditions of life. The lower ranks are subject to the higher, and the higher to superior conditions. Every station is in some measure subject to another; the servant to his master, the child to his parent, and the wife to her husband. Thus it is ordered by Almighty God, who requires a due respect and submission from our hands—"obey the powers that are above you," saith St. Paul, "and that because all power is derived from above."

This is the principle that the child Jesus was governed by, during his long subjection in Nazareth; during which period he could have appeared in public, wrought a great many miracles, and converted whole nations, nay the entire world; yet because that was not the will of his Heavenly Father, and that his hour was not as yet come, he remained contented in obscurity and retirement. Divines and doctors of the Church infer from this subjection of Christ Jesus, that godliness and perfection do not consist in performing great and conspicuous actions, such as draw the eyes and attention of the world; for, it is very plain, that Christ Jesus was taken up with nothing very remarkable in his retirement, for near thirty years, at Nazareth, and his example must certainly be the rule of all those that aspire to higher degrees of virtue. The most minute actions relating to our duty, and performed with the spirit of religion, contribute more to our advancement in virtue, and are more meritorious in the sight of God, than actions of the greatest splendour. For these actions may easily proceed from vanity, ostentation, or a desire of being noticed and considered in the world; but when a person applies to the most minute observances of his duty, and studies to do them with the greatest perfection of which they can admit, it is evident this person has nothing in view but God, and the fulfilling of his holy law. Yet, Christians, how many are there who mind every thing but the essential duties of their own state?—that mind

their own obligations barely from a worldly principle, without ever reflecting on the divine hand that had placed them in that situation of life, and requires at their hands the accomplishment of all the obligations attendant upon it?

What, then, have we to do, Christians? To convince ourselves, 1st, that our perfection consists in discharging punctually our duty in the station of life God has placed us in; 2nd, in discharging our duty in every respective station with all the fidelity we are capable of, without going out of our sphere, or aiming at higher matters for the sake of human applause. By this means we shall copy after the example of Christ Jesus, who confined himself for thirty years to the lowest occupations in his retreat. By this means, likewise, our virtue will increase with our years, and procure us at length the rewards the Almighty God reserves for all his true and faithful servants, in his heavenly kingdom. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

It is not to be doubted, Christians, but Christ Jesus sanctified in a high degree, and bestowed the most valuable blessings on the wedding at Cana in Galilee, to which he was invited, and at which he condescended to assist, and even honour by so great a miracle, as turning a great quantity of water into wine. By sanctifying this wedding with his divine presence, he prepared the way, as the holy fathers observe, for the great dignity to which matrimony is raised in the New Law, or Christian dispensation. For St. Paul says, matrimony is a great sacrament in Christ, and in his Church; from which words it plainly appears, that matrimony has acquired, from the appointment and institution of Christ, a greater excellency than it had before, and this excellency consists in its being raised, in the New Law, to the dignity of a sacrament.

In the law of Nature, or before the time of Moses, it was only a civil contract, that is, a legal convention or agreement between man and woman. From the time of Moses to the coming of Christ, it was a religious ceremony with regard to the Jews; but since the coming of Christ, it is more than a civil contract, more than a religious ceremony—an actual sacrament; that is, a sacred rite or performance which has the virtue, from the institution of Christ, of conferring divine grace.

But what graces doth it confer? 1st, It confers an augmentation of habitual or sanctifying grace, or that grace

which resides continually in the soul of every just man ; 2nd, It confers actual graces, or the particular aids which are necessary towards discharging the obligations of this state of life, and bearing patiently the hardships attendant upon it, such as the solitudes of the world—bringing forth, educating, and providing for children—and the continual trials that result from continual subjection.

Matrimony is not only a sacrament, but a great sacrament, as St. Paul declares. And how great? “In Christ and in his Church,” he says ; that is, Christians : 1st—because matrimony was instituted to represent, and it naturally represents the spiritual alliance the Almighty God has been pleased to contract with mankind in general, in the person of Christ Jesus ; 2nd—because matrimony was instituted to represent the spiritual alliance Christ Jesus had been pleased to contract with his Church, and all the faithful it is composed of all over the world ; for St. Paul says, “Christ hath loved his Church, and delivered himself for it ;” 3rd—because it was instituted for the noblest ends—the multiplication and propagation of rational beings to serve the Almighty in spirit and truth.

It is from these reasons the same apostle says, that marriage is holy, or a state of sanctity and godliness. But how far is it looked upon in this light, even by the Christians of our days? As marriage is a state of sanctity and godliness according to the declaration of St. Paul, two things necessarily follow ; the first, that people should never engage in it, but from the views of religion ; and the second, that after engaging they should behave according to the strictest rules of religion. But instead of this, people before engaging in the married state seldom or never consult the principles of religion, or live up to them after engaging ; whence it happens that what is in itself, and the designs of Providence, a state of sanctity and godliness, is most commonly profaned by the greater part of mankind, so as to become a state of continual guilt.

The first thing religion prescribes with regard to matrimony is, that people engage in the marriage state with a pure conscience, or with a conscience free from sin ; for matrimony is a sacrament of the New Law, and, consequently, should be treated with the respect due to sacred things. To do otherwise is committing a most criminal and sacrilegious profanation of that sacrament, which St. Paul calls “a great sacrament in Christ and in his Church.” To prevent this sacrilegious profanation, the Church requires that those who are upon the point of engaging in the marriage state previously confess, in

order to obtain that pureness of soul which is requisite for the sacrament, and the state of sanctity to which it gives admittance. But who is it ever thinks seriously of this great and indispensable obligation? Is not matrimony constantly looked upon at least as an indifferent ceremony by the greater part of the Christians of our days? How many are there that go, or would fain go, to the altar to be married immediately after a party of pleasure, without the least preparation for, or reflection upon, the dignity of the sacrament, and the pious dispositions it requires? Even those who pay the greatest deference, and show the greatest veneration for every other sacrament, seem to make no account of matrimony; nevertheless it is no less a sacrament; no less instituted by the author of all sacraments, our blessed Lord and Redeemer, Christ Jesus; no less intended for great and spiritual purposes; no less productive of great and spiritual blessings, than any other sacrament of the New Law. Why then is it, or should it be so constantly profaned, even by those who behave with respect in every other performance of religion?

How many are there, likewise, who receive this sacrament in a state of sin, engaging without previous and necessary consent from parents, or permission from the Church? As a proceeding of this kind is exceedingly sinful in the eyes of God, and a manifest sacrilegious profanation of the sacrament, what must the consequence be? Undoubtedly, Christians, perpetual hardships, disappointments, and troubles. For how is it possible for those to expect a blessing, who enter into the married state, which is a state of sanctity and holiness, by a most flagitious crime? Could we but pry into the secret judgments of the Lord, we certainly should find that receiving the sacrament of matrimony with a guilty conscience, in violation of the laws of God, and the laws of his Church, is the source of all the calamities that attend the many unfortunate marriages we daily see in the world.

The second thing religion prescribes, with regard to matrimony, is, that people be guided by the principles of religion in the choice they make. "Let the person that marries," St. Paul says, "marry in the Lord." From these words of St. Paul it follows, that what those who intend to engage in the married state should first propose unto themselves is, to make such a choice as may be most capable of leading them unto the Lord, by their good and virtuous qualifications. Did this great principle take place in most engagements, virtue, modesty, prudence, and good humour would always prevail over, and be constantly preferred before, the inferior and insignificant

advantages of beauty or fortune. But is this the principle of those who mean to engage in the wedded state? No. Fortune alone is generally consulted on occasions of this kind. Provided the parties be rich and opulent in the world, all is well; although they should be destitute of every social and Christian virtue. Young persons of both sexes are daily disposed of to the highest bidder, in the very midst of Christianity, as slaves are transferred to those that are willing to purchase them at the highest value. Is it then surprising, Christians, that the greater part of marriage engagements should prove, as they generally do, not a state of happiness, as Providence intended them, but a state of perpetual misery, strife, and disunion.

The third thing religion prescribes, with regard to matrimony, is a punctual observance of the essential duties of that state of life, and a constant forbearance with the hardships and difficulties inseparable from it. "I would advise those that are single or unmarried, to remain so," St. Paul says; "however, if thou hast taken a wife, thou hast not sinned; nor has a virgin sinned if she has taken a husband; but both of them will experience the tribulation of the flesh;" that is, both of them will undergo a great deal of trouble and hardship in the world. And truly, Christians, what hardships must necessarily result from a continual subjection to a husband, the bearing of children, rearing, educating, and providing for a large and numerous offspring? But these very hardships make up the wedded duties of that state. It is by bearing with these hardships, and going through them with a spirit of religion, that people are sanctified, and, not only sanctified, but saved in the wedded state; for St. Paul says (1 Tim. ii, 15), "The woman shall be saved through child-bearing," or by the care of her children.

Therefore, as there are very few, comparatively speaking, disposed to follow the advice of the apostle, by remaining single or unmarried, what all young persons should propose unto themselves is, to fulfil punctually, after engaging, all the obligations of the wedded state—fidelity, obedience, condescension, a constant application to the care of their family, and a proper, that is, a Christian education of their offspring. By this means they certainly will partake of all the great blessings the sacrament of matrimony is productive of—joy, peace, and tranquillity in this life, and eternal happiness in the next. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE first thing we are to take notice of, with regard to this day's Gospel, is the miraculous cure our Saviour wrought upon a man afflicted with a leprosy, at his coming down from a mountain where he frequently went to instruct the multitudes of people who followed him. As soon as the man heard of our Saviour's coming down from the mountain, he immediately pierced the crowd that followed him, and threw himself prostrate before him, saying—"Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." It was not only the desire of recovering his health that induced this sick man to apply to Christ Jesus; he was likewise urged there by another powerful motive—a strong inclination of being restored to the society and conversation of his countrymen and fellow-citizens. For you must know, Christians, that as the leprosy was a very hideous and infectious disorder, it was held in great abomination among the Jews; insomuch that it was not lawful for any one to touch those that were troubled with that disorder: and such as did touch them, contracted a legal uncleanness by which they were disqualified from entering into the Temple, or assisting at any exercise of religion, until they were purified in the manner prescribed by the law. It is not then surprising that the sick man, who was not only destitute of help, but likewise cut off in some measure from all public society, made his application unto Christ Jesus, in the most earnest, humble, and confident terms:—"Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Nor was he anyway deceived in his expectation; for the moment he made his request, our Saviour stretched forth his hand and touched him, saying—"I will: be thou made clean; and immediately he was healed from his leprosy."

This leprosy, Christians, the holy fathers and doctors of the Church say is an image or emblem of the inward disorder sin creates in the soul of a Christian. For first, it disfigures the soul, by depriving it of the robe of innocence, and the bright ornament of grace. In this condition it must certainly be a most hideous object—an object of hatred and aversion in the eyes of God. Second—it weakens the soul and deprives it of all its spiritual strength and vigour; insomuch, that a soul in the state of mortal sin is entirely incapable of doing any good work, anything that is meritorious of the grace of God and eternal life. Those who are in the state of sin may, indeed, pray, and sigh, and weep, and thereby obtain the graces of conversion; but while they continue in this sinful state, they

can perform no actions of life, as they are dead in reality in the eyes of God, and deprived of his holy grace which enlivens our actions, and gives them all their merit. Can anything, Christians, be more deplorable than a situation of this kind? Yet how many are there labouring under this deplorable situation, without being sensible thereof, or showing the least concern for it? Ah! Christians, could we but rightly conceive what it is to be displeasing to God, and the object of his hatred and aversion, we would certainly use our utmost endeavours to withdraw ourselves from a situation of that kind in his sight. We would apply to Christ Jesus, who is the divine physician of souls, with as much earnestness and solicitude as the leper in this day's Gospel, beseeching him to cleanse us from the stains of sin, and the hideous marks and impressions it leaves in the soul, and likewise from the spiritual feebleness and languor we contract thereby. If we did apply sincerely to Christ Jesus for this purpose, it is not to be questioned, Christians, but he would hear us and heal our souls with the same bounty and goodness with which he healed the leper mentioned in this day's Gospel. But the misfortune is, that those who languish in a state of mortal sin have no thought of been cured. Their situation, dreadful as it is, is agreeable to their passions and the depravation of their corrupted nature; wherefore they choose to remain in the shades of death, rather than have recourse to Christ Jesus, the author of life, and eternal life. What, then, will the consequence be? They must perish, and perish eternally, through their own fault and perverseness.

After our Saviour had cured the leper, by a miracle, he said unto him—"Take heed thou speakest not of it to any one." What an instance of humility is this! Although the greatest praise and the greatest glory were justly due to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, on account of the very miracles he was daily working in favour of the distressed, yet he would decline publicly all honour and glory, in order to show and convince us, we should never seek for human applause in our actions, but offer them solely to Almighty God. And indeed, Christians, can anything be more reasonable? For what is it in man can be found worthy of praise and applause? Have we anything of ourselves but weakness, imperfections, and sin? If any good you do, is it not the gift of God? "What have you," says the apostle St. Paul, "that you have not received?" And if you have received it, why do you boast, as if you received it not? Although we should fulfil our duty in every respect (which I am very sure is far from being the case

with the greater part of mankind) even then Christ Jesus desires us "to look upon ourselves as useless and unprofitable servants."

When our Saviour had entered the little town of Capharnaum, a centurion, that is, a Roman officer, who had a hundred men under his command, came and requested him, saying, "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is much tormented:" to which our Saviour answered, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, command with a word only, and my servant will be healed. For I am a man also in power, having soldiers under my command, and I say to this man, go, and he goeth; and to another, come, and he cometh; and to my servant, do this, and he doth it." What the centurion meant by these words was, to show the high opinion he had of the power of Jesus. For they imply this much:—If I, who am no more than a mortal man, have authority enough to do whatever I think proper, by the means of those I have under my command, how much more must you, who are vested with the power of Almighty God, be able to do what you desire, and restore my servant to health by one single word? This was indeed, Christians, a most lively faith; for which reason our Saviour was pleased to take notice of it publicly, and declare he had not met with so great faith in all Israel. But the public praise and commendation he was pleased to give the lively faith of the centurion, was, at the same time, a severe rebuke to the multitude of the Jews that were about him, who, notwithstanding his frequent instructions, and the many miracles to which they were daily witnesses, had so little faith in him. This appears plainly from the following words of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ:—"Many shall come from the east and the west, and feast with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast forth into exterior darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." That is, Christians, the greatest strangers from the remotest parts of the earth, shall come and be converted, and after being converted, attain to eternal happiness, which is here represented under the image of a splendid and delicious banquet; whilst the children of the kingdom, that is the Jews, who had the law and the prophets, and amongst whom the Messiah was born and appeared, shall be cast forth into exterior darkness, and excluded for ever from the society of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. Can anything be more dreadful than this declaration of our Lord

and Saviour, Jesus Christ? Let us consider how far it may concern each of ourselves in particular. We are, undoubtedly, the children of the kingdom, inasmuch as we have been "substituted to the Jews," as St. Paul declares; born in, and publicly profess the faith of Christ; but is it not very much to be feared, that from our own neglect in the service of God, we shall be cast into exterior darkness, whilst others shall be converted to the faith we profess, and by their fidelity to the law, step into the places that were designed for us in the kingdom of heaven? We profess the faith of Christ Jesus, it is true; but do we live conformable to the maxims of this divine faith? If we do not, instead of contributing to our eternal happiness, it will only serve to bring us under a severe condemnation. For our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, declares that the unbelievers will be treated with less severity, at the last day, than those that heard of the name of Christ and rejected it; or that received the law, and did not comply therewith. What, then, are we to do, Christians? To behave as the children of the kingdom; not only in believing Christ Jesus, but to live according to our belief. If we do, we shall never be cast into exterior darkness; but rather admitted to feast, for ever and ever, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that is, with all the saints and elect of God, in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE storm mentioned in this day's Gospel, in which the disciples of our Lord were in the most imminent danger of perishing, inasmuch as the boat in which they were was covered all over with waves, is a lively image, the holy fathers say, of the many dangers and storms even the very just stand exposed to, on the boisterous ocean of this world. Though they sail under the direction of divine Providence, and, in some measure, in the company of Christ Jesus, yet they frequently meet with such violent conflicts as are sufficient to overwhelm their virtue, and drive them headlong to everlasting ruin. In a situation of this kind they are necessarily filled, as well as the disciples of our Lord, with the liveliest apprehensions, and forced to cry out unto Christ Jesus, "Save us, O Lord; for we are upon the point of perishing." With regard to his disciples, Jesus Christ was indeed graciously pleased to allay their fears, by dispelling the storm, and suddenly calming the raging waves: for the Gospel says, "that rising up, he commanded

the winds and the sea ; and a great calm ensued." But this he is not always pleased to do, in reference to his greatest favourites, the just and good. On the contrary, he frequently leaves them, even during their whole life, exposed to many violent storms, temptations, and sufferings ; and although, in this dreadful situation, they may cry out unto him for relief, yet he seems to be asleep, as it is mentioned in this day's Gospel ; that is, deaf to their cries, and insensible of the manifold dangers that surround them. What can be the cause, Christians, of this extraordinary conduct on the part of Almighty God ? Or how is it consistent with his infinite goodness to abandon, as it were, his most faithful servants in their highest distress ? Is he either incapable of relieving them, or unwilling to grant them relief ? Does he not see the extremities to which they are frequently drawn ? And if he does, why doth he not rise up to command the winds and the seas ? Why doth he not dispel the storm, and restore peace and tranquillity to their disconsolate minds ? This is, Christians, the deep and impenetrable mystery of divine Providence ; but a mystery which must undoubtedly be grounded on the most solid and substantial reasons, on the part of God. For as he is governed by infinite wisdom, and justice, and goodness, in all his actions ; it is plain he must act from the same principles, in leaving the just amidst the sufferings and oppressions of the world. This alone, Christians, were enough, I think, to reconcile the inscrutable ways of Providence unto our thoughts : several reasons, however, may be assigned why the Almighty treats his friends with the greatest severity in appearance ; while the wicked and unjust are suffered to prosper mostly in all their designs and undertakings.

The first reason why the Almighty God leaves the just exposed to the most violent storms of life, is to try their virtue and fidelity. It is an easy matter to be faithful to God while everything succeeds according to our wishes and desires. The most common and imperfect virtue will support itself in easy circumstances of this kind. But to adhere faithfully to the Lord, "when he stretches forth his hand and touches," (Job. i),—when the storm begins to rise—when violent temptations assail us on every side, requires, Christians, the most solid virtue, the most firm and unshaken constancy. Before we are tried, we do not know either our weakness or our virtue. In the absence of danger, we may think ourselves firm and immovable as the rock ; but in the time of trial, we often feel and experience the reverse. "They come unto me for a time" saith our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, "but

then they go away from me in the time of temptation." It is, therefore, Christians, in the time of temptation alone, that we can be satisfied of our having any share of virtue, any fear, or any love for God. And this is the reason why the royal prophet used frequently to address the Almighty God in the following manner: "try me, Lord, and sound my heart." "Look into the most secret affections and dispositions of my soul." Then shall my fidelity appear in its brightest colours; then shall it be made known to the whole world how deeply thy holy law is imprinted on my heart. Now, Christians, what advantage must it not be for any one to know that he is united to God and faithful in his duty, though he be left alone to struggle and contend with the storms that agitate his life?

The second reason which induces the Almighty God to leave his friends, as he did his own disciples, in the greatest apprehensions of perishing, is to purify their virtue, and divest them of all earthly views and expectations. If wealth and prosperity were the necessary consequences of virtue, we should all love God, and serve him on this very account, with a view to the riches and happiness of this world. But the Almighty God will have us love him purely for his own sake. Wherefore he takes especial care to lead the just through such scenes of disappointments as must embitter every situation of life, and leave them no taste, no relish, no love or affection, but for God alone. This is what the prophet sets forth in one of his psalms, where, after tenderly but respectfully complaining of his continual misfortunes to the Lord, he concludes in the following manner, at that very time—"My soul refused all sort of consolation. I only thought of thee, O Lord, and was comforted."

The third reason why the Almighty leaves the just and the good in a continual state of trial and danger, is, to give them an opportunity of increasing their merits, and consequently their rewards in heaven. For without dangers and combats, there can be no victory—without trial no combat—without victory, no crown or reward. "No man is crowned," St. Paul says, "but he that fought properly." Is it not then, Christians, a real blessing to the righteous and just to be left in such situations as must put it continually in their way to make new and large additions to the glory that is reserved for them, in the kingdom of heaven, where, as our Saviour says, there are many mansions, that is, different degrees of happiness, all proportioned to the various degrees of our merits upon earth? Or how can the just complain of that disposition

of divine Providence, which for every moment of tribulation, bestows upon them, as the apostle says—"an eternal weight of glory in heaven?"

The fourth reason is, to compel and force the just, in some measure, to persevere to the end in justice and righteousness. Were they to prosper continually in this world, and meet with little or no disappointments, they soon would follow the wicked ways of the world, and consequently abandon the Almighty God. But "as no one is to be saved," according to the express declaration of Christ Jesus, "but he that persevereth unto the end," the Almighty God, in his infinite mercy, removes those dangers and temptation at a distance, which would infallibly seduce the just, and lead them astray from the ways of righteousness. He conducts them, as it were, by the hand, through the narrow and rugged paths of salvation; whilst he suffers sinners to walk and run on cheerfully, in the broad and enchanting way that leads directly to eternal perdition!

It cannot be denied, Christians, but a great many just men have flourished and prospered in the world. Witness the patriarchs of the Old Law, and many holy kings and princes in the New. But then, these prosperous, just men were continually apprehensive of the dangers to which they were exposed from this very prosperity; and, in consequence of their apprehensions, took the most effectual steps to secure their virtue, by practising, in the highest affluence, the severest law of self-denial and abnegation, and entertaining, in the greatest elevation of power, the humblest sentiments of a Christian mind. But as this would require a most extraordinary assistance and protection from heaven, the Almighty chooses, in general, to refuse the worldly advantages of wealth and prosperity, which are attended with the greatest dangers to salvation. The examples were few and only calculated to show the virtue and efficacy of the grace of God.

What, then, are we to infer from the Gospel of this day? Two things—the first, Christians, that we are to consider this world as a scene of continual war, in which we are incessantly to engage and struggle with many powerful enemies, visible and invisible—the evil spirit, the world, and the flesh; or, to speak in the language of this day's Gospel, the world, as a boisterous ocean, on which we must meet with many furious and violent storms, that threaten nothing less than eternal ruin and destruction. Secondly, that we are to make it a rule to ourselves to cry out unto the Lord for assistance in the time of distress, as the disciples of Jesus Christ did

when the waves were rushing in upon them, and upon the point of overwhelming the little vessel in which they were. Although he may seem to be asleep for a time, or insensible to our cries, he certainly will relieve us in the end, either by dispelling entirely the storm, or enabling us, by his holy grace, to overcome all the difficulties we may labour under. Thus it was, he behaved toward St. Paul; for he assures us, that although he thrice had prayed the Almighty God to relieve him from a violent temptation, or "from the angel of Satan," as he calls it, that was continually singing and tormenting him; still the Almighty refused to deliver him from the tempting spirit; but assured him at the same time, "that his grace was sufficient unto him:" or, in other words, that with the assistance of his grace, he could not only resist, but even conquer the evil spirit. Even this must be a great consolation to a just man, who means to persevere in justice, inasmuch as it is plain from thence, he can, by grace, not only withstand the various storms of this life, but even reach, at length, the delightful harbour of eternal rest and tranquillity. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

NOTHING can be more instructive than the subject laid before us in the Gospel of this day, as it discloses, on one hand, the wisdom whereby the eternal God governs this world, and on the other, his abundant mercies towards mankind. "The kingdom of heaven," says Christ Jesus, "is likened to a man that soweth good seed in his field; but while he was asleep, his enemy came and sowed tares upon the wheat." The field here means this world, where every country, every city, and perhaps every village bears justice to this parable—where the good and the bad, the elect and the reprobate, the wheat and the tares, grow up to maturity—the one planted by the finger of God, the other by the great enemy of man, the Devil. Distinctions here, it is true, are not seen, but those which arise from the policy of human laws or human inventions. That strict and rigorous justice which is the prerogative of the Almighty, is neither felt nor exercised here below: here his abundant mercies are his distinguishing attribute. This mercy disarms his justice, or no sin would remain one instant unpunished! The terrible exercise of his justice is awfully beheld in the sudden expulsion of the fallen angels, from the realms of light, to the everlasting abodes of horror! One sin, and that only in thought, produced in an instant, the great Revolution in

heaven, as stated by St. John—and behold the whole world is covered over with sinners, who move on as securely as if they had a license to sin, or that sin now was not so criminal as it formerly was! But, Christians, God being essentially unchangeable, sin to him must ever be equally and invariably hateful; but his abundant mercies disarm his justice in this life, in hopes, as the Spirit of God declares, in the 36th chapter of the prophet Jeremias, “that they may return every man from his wicked ways, and I will forgive their iniquity and their sin.” This patient forbearance on the part of God, should be no reason why the sinner would delay; but on the contrary, the chief motive for a speedy repentance: for the angels are represented this day to be zealous to uproot the sin and the sinner. “Wilt thou that we go and gather it up?” “No,” says the Lord, “lest perhaps gathering up the tares, you root up the wheat also together with it.” The mysterious dispensation of Providence is here seen towards his elect here below, where the wicked are often seen to prosper, and to trample upon the virtuous and good. Were we to judge by appearances, we should even suppose, from the flood of joys and prosperity which pours in upon sinners in this life, that they are the special friends of heaven, and that the virtuous, by the afflictions which grow around them, are the unfavoured part of the human race: but observe—“in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up the tares first, and bind them into bundles to burn; but the wheat gather ye into my barn.”

Such is the grand scene exhibited by the Gospel this day, wherein the tender mercies of the Lord towards sinners, exhibit the most striking figure—wonderful indeed is that patience he displays, and the desire he feels for the return of sinners to his friendship and grace! All-sufficient in himself, the Almighty finds, in the plenitude of his own excellence, the completest happiness, and expresses the same concern for our felicity, as if his were connected therewith, or in any ways dependent thereon. The dignity of the master disappears in the tender solicitude of the parent. His greatest care appears to be, to secure our eternal interests, even to the prejudice of his own. His paternal goodness causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall equally on all men. Tares grow up with the wheat: the saint and the sinner, the just and the unjust, the righteous and ungodly, grow up and intermix in this world, where his benignity affords protection to all from winter colds and summer heats. If the ministers of his justice cry out, Lord, didst thou not sow good seed in thy

field? How comes it then to be overspread with tares? Art thou willing that we go and gather them up together? "No," replies his mercy, "let them both grow until the harvest." On account of the wheat he spares the tares. Mind that, you favoured ones of life; you who imagine this world was made for Cæsar, mind that! Almighty God forbears with the wicked, even shelters them under the wings of his mercy, and suspends the punishment due to their crimes, that they may be converted and live. "The wicked are suffered to live," says St. Augustine, "that they may be amended, or that the virtues of the just may be tried and exercised by them." Every hour during their mortality, the Lord ceases not to call them a thousand different ways, sweetly and tenderly inviting them to return to their duties. But be astonished, O ye heavens! how little regarded are his invitations—his rewards and punishments, his threats and promises, are generally slighted—men run on in the wicked ways of sin, unmindful and unfearful of the dreadful fate which is reserved for them during the boundless length of eternity! You have been enemies to the Lord, by sin, for ten, twenty, perhaps forty years; did you but know "the gift of God," as Christ Jesus said to the Samaritan in the Gospel—did you but know the sentiments of affection, the bowels of mercy, which our Redeemer possesses towards those who are sincerely resolved to repent; you, I say, who dare not so much as think of conversion, from the magnitude and heinousness of your sins, you certainly would have immediate recourse to the Redeemer of the world, who is ready, not only to wipe away all your sins, but moreover to enrich you with his choicest blessings.

I cannot advance a stronger argument to show the readiness which our Lord displays, upon all occasions, in receiving to his mercy the greatest sinners, provided they return with contrite and humble hearts, than his wonderful patience in bearing with them during the long course of their iniquities. But superior to any argument are his own positive assurances of granting forgiveness to the greatest sinners; and these assurances supported by a thousand instances. Unhappy sinner, whoever you are, if Almighty God were not disposed to receive you into his mercies, would he have suffered you to act so long in opposition to his commands? No: He would have crushed you, in your wicked course, the moment you were forming wicked designs. His thunders are uplifted in his all-powerful hands; and did he let them fly where his justice directed, at once an end would come of your life and your iniquities; but his abundant mercies prevail, and bind up the arms of

his justice. He seems to disregard the interests of his glory, in order to reclaim you to a better life, by repeated instances of bounty and patience. To those outward expressions of his goodness, I might add the inward touches of his holy grace, which awaken, alarm, and rouse up the salutary fear of eternal burning in hell-fire; as also the absence of that peace and tranquillity, which the worldling is ever in pursuit of and never finds; that content which is never felt by the avaricious or the miser; and the delusion of those joys which the voluptuous and the sensual are ever grasping and never reaching. These disappointments, anxieties, and fears, which agitate and occupy the hearts of sinners, are so many calls of his mercy to the substantial joys and solid peace, which alone are to be found in a virtuous life, and which alone are enjoyed by the servants of the Lord!

But if Almighty God be infinite in mercy, he is equally so in justice. The day of reckoning will come—his justice must be satisfied—in the time of harvest he will say to the reapers, “Gather up the tares.” At the end of life each man must appear, the sinner as well as the saint, at the judgment-seat of God; and woe be unto those whom the Lord shall then order to be bound, in order to burn for all eternity. Such shall be the fate of all those who insult him now, by their immoral lives and multiplied crimes, unless they return to his sweet embraces by a true change of heart, before it is late—before it is late, I say, lest death cut short the thread of life, and then all is lost! Every moment should be mistrusted, and guarded against by the sinner, because the fatal stroke is always ready, and yet concealed from view! as in the time past, every instant might have been the period of our existence, so in the time to come, every instant may become the beginning of our eternity. The morning will surely come when we shall not see the evening, or the evening shall come when we will not see the morning.—This awful period may now be near at hand!

Many reasons press on me to show the necessity of immediate conversion; but I will argue with sinners in their own way, and see what grounds they stand upon who protract their conversion to the end of life, and rely then upon special aids from heaven.

To consider the security wherein the enemies of God (by that word I mean all sinners) live, one should suppose they were masters of their days, and had futurity at their disposal. We know, notwithstanding, that nothing is more uncertain than life, whether we consult reason, religion, or experience. Reason tells us that life depends on the inward disposition of

the corporal frame ; on the harmony and concurrent action of its different parts, whereof many are so finely drawn, and of so delicate a texture, that a slight accident, a mere nothing, is often enough to disturb the motion, and destroy the powers: so that it becomes really wonderful, from the delicacy of the organs whereon life depends, and the manifold accidents whereunto we are liable, that sudden deaths are not more frequent—and this surprise increases, when we consider the numberless physical complaints to which we are liable ; besides the adventitious evils of unwholesome air, hard labour, violent exercise and intemperate excess—Life is, at most, but a small portion of air, which is continually circulating within us, until it finds a proper passage to issue out and take its flight. And is this life that solid foundation whereon to build the hopes of future conversion ? Is this the well-bound raft whereon to risk, in the tempestuous ocean of life, our souls, our eternity, our hopes, and our all ? Deluded sinners, you imagine you will have time to repair the immoralities of your past life, and return unto the Lord your God ; but did you ever consult your reason on this head ? did you ever survey with care the many dangers which surround you on every side ? did you ever examine the texture of those parts which are the essential props of life ? You did not surely, or you would have seen how slight and precarious were your grounds for dependence.

The sinner's dependence on future conversion appears still more perilous, from the assurances given by religion that "death shall come like a thief at night: Ye know not the day or hour—be prepared ;" for judgment without mercy shall fall upon all sinners, as the Gospel this day assures you ; "bind up the tares to burn." The apostles exhibit the same truths in their writings ; and the ministers of Christ Jesus daily proclaim the evils of delayed conversions ; and still you may dream away life in the very arms of death, under the false idea of returning to the Lord on a future day. You make a traffic of salvation, by casting plans for future times. Turn your eyes about, consult experience, and behold what havoc, in a few years, death has made among your friends and acquaintances—consult the bills of mortality, they will support the truth I now advance, that nothing is more uncertain than the hour of death ; and equally true it is, that on death your lot for eternity depends. If, therefore, heaven or hell must be the eternal destiny of every one, if this destiny depends on a good or bad death, if the circumstance and period of death be veiled up in impenetrable darkness, it follows

that we should not delay one instant our conversion to the Lord our God ; for although our God is abundant in mercies, he is still a jealous God—jealous that those mercies which he now offers should be slighted, because his justice may withhold them from the sinner hereafter.

Besides, the folly of protracting conversion to a late period is increased by the obstacles to conversion, and the difficulties which old age and infirmity present. To macerate the body by wholesome penance, to chastise it for its rebellion and criminal gratifications by fasting, is not easy done at a time when all the powers of nature call for indulgence and support. Penance being a satisfaction due to divine justice for sin, and absolutely necessary, in youth becomes difficult, and in old age almost impossible. This conduct is also marked by injustice and ingratitude, in devoting the last, least, most feeble and most uncertain part of life to the service of the Lord, in return for all the blessings heaped on you for many years. Attend, therefore, to the counsel of the Holy Ghost : “ Be mindful of your Creator in the days of your youth.” But if his counsels are insufficient, listen to his threats : “ Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day ; for his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he shall destroy thee.”—Eccl. And in Prov. i.—“ I have called upon you, and you would not listen to me. I have stretched out my hands, and you would not regard me. You have despised all my counsels, and neglected my reproofs ; therefore I will laugh at your destruction ; and when you shall call upon me in your turn, I will be deaf to your cries.” How terrible is all this !—The same says Christ Jesus in the Gospel :—“ Ye shall seek me, and ye shall not find me ; and ye shall die in your sins.” Thus it is that God threatens to deal with sinners in their last extremity, who during life neglect the time of their visitation—the gracious calls and mercies offered to them. This made the great St. Augustine say : “ Penance done by a sick man is sick, and that done by a dying man, I fear is also dead—for he seldom dies well who lived ill.” Common observation confirms these remarks of St. Augustine : when sinners come to that extremity, and lie agonizing between heaven and hell, under the stroke of divine judgment, seldom are they so sensible of the wickedness, or so efficaciously touched with the remorse of a sincere sorrow for their past crimes, as they are distracted with the terrors of an approaching death, and the dark visionary apprehensions of what is to come—the pains and agonies both of mind and body, together with the heaviness and stupidity

caused by sickness, even when the use of reason is not entirely taken away (as frequently happens in fevers), are enough to disqualify sinners, in a great measure, from applying their thoughts seriously to the important affair of their soul's salvation. In such condition, generally speaking, they do but discharge themselves of burthensome reflections, as mariners do of the cargo of a ship that has sprung a leak. Everything is done in a hurry, and with precipitation: sinners only part with their sins in the one case, as those mariners do with their goods in the other—to pick them up again when the leak is stopped or the storm appeased!

Supposing now that a sinner, by a long life and creeping infirmity, should have the time, will he obtain the grace of perfect repentance at the end of life? That is a question too presumptuous to answer in the affirmative: for Christ Jesus declares, "No man can come to me unless he be drawn by my Father." How?—by grace. Now grace being the choicest gift that God confers on man, in general, it is reserved for the special friends of heaven. To sinners he offers, nay presses them by the preachers of the Gospel to accept, the graces of conversion and forgiveness—but will our good God, think you, perform the greatest of all miracles to the dying sinner, in bestowing the grace of a true conversion, when this grace, during a long life, has been constantly offered on the one hand, and constantly rejected, despised, and trampled on, on the other? Do not deceive yourselves—a true conversion at the point of death, under the circumstances that I have just touched upon, is almost equally unfrequent in the Christian world, as the appearance of a comet in the planetary system. Appearances of penance, it is true, may then be strong; but these appearances are scarcely ever grounded on the love of God. "The cries of a dying sinner," St. Augustine remarks, "are not those of one who forsakes sin, but whom sin forsakes; who trembles not for the injury he has offered the Lord by his crimes, but for the punishment ready to avenge those crimes."

In cases where penance is to be begun at the end of life, men should exert all their powers in bewailing their sins, and calling earnestly for mercy through Christ Jesus, as one drowning should grasp the twig or bulrush when no other chance of safety remains—but as none but a madman would plunge into a whirlpool, because a twig or a bulrush presents the bare possibility of an escape, so none but madmen will trust their salvation to a death-bed repentance. The honour of Almighty God seems bound to check the insolence of those, by refusing them mercy, who constantly refused and spurned

it during life ! And, let me ask, do they not justly deserve to be abandoned by God at the hour of death, who abandon him during life, and despise the riches of his goodness and mercy ! Is it to those who deserve it least, that God will show the greatest favours ? Is it to the most audacious and ungrateful sinners that he will be the most indulgent ? Is it, I say, to be supposed, that, after walking on boldly in the road of perdition, the sinner shall snatch heaven in a moment, when the best of Christians scarce attain to it after many years ? Mercy indeed may come at the last gasp ; but what right have you to expect that your death will obtain that favour, whose life earned nothing but anger, or who cease to sin only when the power of sinning is taken away ? Be not deceived, Christians, God despises those late conversions, which the dread of hell, not the love of justice, produces !

Far am I from fixing limits to the unbounded mercies of the Lord, or of denying that late conversions may happen, and have happened, although we know of none. Should you tell me here, the good thief at his last hour was received into favour, I deny that point, and maintain, with the great St. Augustine, it was not his last, but his first hour ; inasmuch as he was never illumined before with the light of faith. But the glorious light of faith has shone on you since the dawn of life ; and your duties have been laid before you by the preachers of the Gospel—that Gospel this day thunders out, the tares shall be bound and burnt : sinners who resist or slight the mercies of God, shall be cut off in their sins, and bound for ever in hell. “ But the wheat bring into my barn : ” all you who this day forsake sin, and bend your necks under the sweet yoke of Christ Jesus, shall be received, after this uncertain life, into the bright mansions of his glory in heaven. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

By the two parables mentioned in the Gospel of this day, we are to understand the rise, establishment and progress of the Christian religion. It is called the kingdom of heaven, because by this divine establishment or law, Almighty God rules over the hearts of mankind ; and because by the observance of this divine law alone mankind can attain the kingdom of God. It is the Christian religion that has established the spiritual empire of Christ Jesus upon earth : it is likewise the Christian religion that points out the way to, and supplies us with the

necessary means for obtaining that heavenly empire, which is the inheritance of the true and faithful disciples of Christ, and therefore very justly called the kingdom of heaven. This religion, which is called in the Gospel the kingdom of God, was very inconsiderable at first, being confined to a few persons of no figure or authority—the apostles of Christ; and known only in one single spot of the earth—the city of Jerusalem. From these slender beginnings it arose gradually to such a pitch of greatness and splendour, as struck the whole world with wonder and amazement. Not unlike the rising day, which at dawn is scarcely discernible to the sharpest eye, it began to grow bright, still brighter, until at length it cast such a blaze as drew the attention and admiration of all mankind! For this reason our Saviour compares it to a grain of mustard-seed, which although it be one of the smallest of all grains that are sown in the earth, often shoots up in warm countries, where it is cherished by the genial heat of the sun, into a lofty and branchy tree, so as to afford shelter and cover to the very fowls of the air. And this is the reason why it is also compared to a small portion of leaven, which has the virtue to ferment, and by fermenting, swell a small quantity of flour into a large and considerable mass.

Nothing indeed, Christians, can be more wonderful than the establishment and progress of the Christian faith. Although it was confined in the beginning to a very few, and those few poor, obscure, and illiterate, and shut up within the walls of Jerusalem; yet it soon spread into the neighbouring parts; and from the neighbouring parts into the adjacent countries; and from the adjacent countries into the remotest parts of the earth; insomuch that St. Paul could justly boast that the Christian religion had been spread, even in his days, all over the world. The hand of God, and his hand alone, undoubtedly accomplished this great work, as must visibly appear to any candid person who impartially considers the event. For what was to be done in order to establish the Christian religion upon earth? For this purpose it was necessary to abolish the superstitions of the Pagan religion; to remove the prejudices and errors of mankind; to give them new maxims and new sentiments: in a word, to change the whole face of the earth. In this great work, it was necessary to contend with the abuses of power, the wisdom of philosophers, the zeal of idolaters, and the corruption of libertines and unbelievers. But how could all this be compassed by a few men, who had neither learning, nor credit, nor fortune, nor friends, to support them? Undoubtedly it could not, if the Almighty

God had not interfered, and brought about by his infinite power the accomplishment of the prophecy which Christ Jesus pronounced in the Gospel of this day, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard-seed, which when sown is the smallest of all grains; but afterwards shoots up into a lofty tree, so as to afford shelter to the birds of the air."

The visible change that appeared in the world upon the establishment of Christianity proves it came from God, and was the work of God. What adds to this, certainly, is the nature and character of that religion which was established upon the ruins of idolatry all over the world; the sublimity of its mysteries, the purity and severity of its morals; for did the Christian religion offer nothing to our belief but what is clear and conceivable, did it prescribe nothing but what is pleasing to nature, it might have been established in the world without any extraordinary difficulties. But, Christians, it is quite the reverse; for it contains many deep and profound mysteries which surpass all human comprehension, and prescribes many severe duties which are repugnant to human nature in the highest degree—humility, mortification, forgiveness, the love of our greatest enemies, a spirit of disinterestedness, a contempt of riches, and a constant resolution of sacrificing our fortunes and our lives, rather than transgress any one material point of the law. And yet this law, so repugnant to human nature, so contrary to all the sentiments of flesh and blood, which is grounded on the cross, and preaches up nothing but the cross, was received, embraced, and professed by all mankind, in a very short space of time, owing to the co-operation of the powerful hand of God. Other religions have indeed made a great progress in the world. That of Mahomet, in particular, has overrun a great part of the earth; but this religion is grounded on the grossest ignorance, as it forbids the use of letters, favours the passions, tolerates the most licentious disorders, and was besides supported by violence, and propagated by fire and sword. Therefore it cannot be surprising it should have met with a kind reception from the ignorant and the corrupted part of mankind. But that the Christian religion, which restrains every passion, condemns every disorder, and forbids even the least criminal thought or desire, should be propagated and established amongst mankind, without any other arms, as St. Paul says, than the virtue of the cross of Christ, and amidst the most violent persecutions that could be raised by the fury of tyrants or the rage of hell, is really surprising in the highest degree; so

that we may justly admire with the apostle, St. John, "the great victory which our faith has gained all over the world!"

These are, Christians, the foundations or the strong and undeniable reasons which prove that the Christian religion is the work of God—because if it had not been the work of God, it could never have been established among mankind, from the opposition it has to all the notions and sentiments of man. Now, if the Christian religion be the work of God, as it evidently is, it necessarily follows its mysteries are true, and its laws holy and just; because Almighty God, who is the essential and eternal Truth, the Author and Source of all justice and holiness, could not support or authorise anything inconsistent with truth, justice, and holiness. It follows, also, that the promises and threats contained in the Christian religion must necessarily come to pass, as they are the declarations of Christ Jesus, the Son of God. These promises and threats consist in eternal happiness for all those who fulfil the laws of Christ; and eternal misery and pain for all those who refuse fulfilling the laws of Christ. We have all embraced and daily profess the Christian faith. We call ourselves Christians, and glory in being so called by the rest of mankind. But are we deserving of so glorious a name? No, unless we fulfil the laws of Christ, and square our actions by the maxims of his Gospel. You, who style yourselves Christians, do not deceive yourselves; you possess the shadow not the substance, the figure not the reality, the name not the character of Christians, whilst Pagan vices disgrace your actions—avarice, contention, dishonesty, haughtiness, arrogance, and dissoluteness. Answer me now, how are these reconcileable with the maxims of the faith you profess, which preaches up nothing but humility, self-denial, justice, godliness, and pureness of soul?

Christians! Christians! can anything be more capable of filling us with shame and confusion in the eyes of the Lord, than to consider the divine religion we profess, which converted and sanctified the whole world; and in the place of error, superstition, oppression, and dissoluteness, substituted truth, religion, charity, and reservedness; insomuch that the primitive Christians were distinguished by the name of Saints—to consider that this divine religion has made no impression on our minds, no alteration in our life or actions these many years past! What can be the cause of such extreme insensibility on our parts? It is this—because you are Christians, you vainly flatter yourselves with a false security; but I tell you, on the part of Almighty God this day, that nothing will put you in possession of that glory which Christ Jesus has

purchased for you on the cross, or screen you from this terrible justice in hell-fire, but by looking into and discharging the duties incumbent on you all as Christians. Looking into the obligations of your faith will shew you that professing the Christian religion, without fulfilling its holy laws, instead of being an advantage, is, on the contrary, the greatest misfortune imaginable; because Christ Jesus assures us in the Gospel, that the Heathens themselves will be treated with less severity the last day, than those who believed in Christ, and did not fulfil his laws.

It remains for us, therefore, to be extremely thankful to God for having called us to the faith of Christ, which is the only way to the kingdom of heaven, as Christ Jesus says, "This is life everlasting, that they know thee, O Heavenly Father! and whom thou hast sent, Christ Jesus:" and in the second place, to form a strong resolution of living up to our faith, in a manner becoming Christians; and the Lord God will surely reward our faith, and crown our good works for a little time on earth, with eternal joys in heaven. Amen.

SEPTUAGESIMA.

"Ite et vos in vineam meam."

WHO is this master of a family who went out early in the morning, to hire workmen into his vineyard? Jesus Christ himself, who came down from heaven to point out to us the paths of eternal happiness. The vineyard is the faith of Christ; the workmen, all those that adhere to the faith of Christ; the labour, the observance of the law of God, and the sanctification of the soul; the hire, eternal happiness. Heaven, Christians, is a reward; and the reward of the faithful workman alone, as appears from these words of Christ Jesus, "Your reward shall be great in heaven." We have been all called to this vineyard of the Lord; but what have we done in it? Let each of us, Christians, turn his thoughts inwardly upon himself, and examine how he has laboured in this vineyard of the Lord, since he arrived at the years of discretion. Have we fulfilled, constantly, the laws of our God—the commandments of his Church? Have we constantly applied to the essential duties of every Christian in general and the essential occupation of each one's station in particular? Christians, have we not been rather, of the number of those slothful and indolent workmen, who stood idle in the marketplace all the day long? If we do ourselves justice, we

certainly must acknowledge, that we have not spent one single day of our whole lives in the vineyard of the Lord—that is, in serving God, and improving our souls in virtue and godliness. This is undoubtedly the case with a great many of the Christians of our days; for, let me ask yourselves, can anything be more common than to see persons of both sexes, spending whole days, very often their whole life, in idle amusements, unprofitable visits, insignificant conversations, dangerous, if not sinful, recreations? Is this labouring in the vineyard of the Lord? Is this leading a Christian life? Is this living conformably to the maxims of Christ Jesus? or conformably to the very dictates of natural reason! Undoubtedly not; for the maxims of Christ inform us, “we are to do good while we have the time to do it;” and that nothing can be more precious than the time we throw away, inasmuch as every moment thereof, when well employed, is capable of procuring for us an eternal weight of glory in heaven. Reason tells us that the Almighty God must have had some view or design in introducing us into this world, which certainly must be quite inconsistent with the useless and unprofitable life a great many are seen to lead—and what is still more astonishing is, that persons of this character seem to make no account of the idleness they live in, and imagine they are no ways answerable for it in the eyes of God. But how can they forget that idleness was always held amongst the capital sins? Besides, does not Christ Jesus assure us in the Gospel, “there is not an idle word we drop, but we are accountable for in the sight of God?” and, if so, how much more must we be accountable at the tribunal of Christ for a long and empty course of a long and empty life?

It is not to be questioned, Christians, but that idleness, in general, is extremely criminal in the sight of God. But when and how far is it criminal? It is always a crime when it makes us omit any one essential obligation of religion, such as prayer, and the worship of the Lord, in the sacrifice of the New Law; that is, should we neglect, through idleness, to pray as often as we are obliged, or assist at the sacrifice, or inform our minds of the necessary duties of religion. 2nd.—It is always a crime when it makes us omit any one essential obligation relating to our different states in life. Thus a parent is certainly guilty of a crime as often as he neglects taking proper care of his children and family; and a master or mistress, of their servants, or others, who may be committed to their care. 3rd.—Idleness is always criminal when it is so great as to prevent our applying to some serious occupation that may be

necessary for the preservation of virtue ; for, be pleased to observe, that as the mind is an active principle, it can never be at rest : it must be employed in good or in evil. If it be not employed in good, it will certainly decline to evil ; therefore, to prevent its declining to evil, it is necessary it be taken up with some good and serious occupation ; “for idleness,” the Holy Ghost declares, “is attended with a long and numerous train of evils and mischiefs.” Let us, therefore, Christians, attend the call of Christ ; let us enter his vineyard and work strenuously therein—every man according to his capacity and situation in life ; that is, let us apply strenuously to the great and important business of our salvation, by giving all our application to the duties of religion, in the first place ; and next, the duties attendant upon our respective stations in the world. O Christians ! have we no sins or offences to atone for ? no graces or blessings to obtain ? no dangers or difficulties to foresee or guard against ? no duties to learn ? none to fulfil ? Let us therefore employ that precious time we incessantly misspend, in doing penance for our sins ; in suing for and obtaining the blessing of heaven ; in considering of, or taking just measures to avoid the manifold dangers of life : let us do this, and certainly we will have very little time to spare. “What does it avail a man,” saith our Lord and Saviour, Christ Jesus, “to gain the whole world, if he should lose his soul ?” “All the rest will fade away,” the prophet says, “like a blade of grass before the sun ;” but nothing can make one amends for the loss of his soul. Nevertheless, Christians, have we not been often in danger of losing our immortal souls, and beholding ourselves condemned to everlasting punishments ? Let us, then, no longer run such dreadful risks ; but betake ourselves timely to the vineyard of the Lord—that is, bend all our thoughts and application towards the salvation of our souls. By this means we can make amends for all our past negligence and idleness ; for we are assured in this day’s Gospel, that those that came at the last hour received as much as they that worked from the first hour, and bore all the burden of the heat and day. For the Almighty God does not compute our services from the length of time, but from our good will, and the fervency of the heart, as appears from these words of holy writ : “God loveth him that giveth cheerfully.” If, therefore, we repent sincerely of our past sloth and negligence, and spend the last hour, that is, the remainder of our lives, in the service of God, practising virtue and godliness, we certainly will receive as great a reward as those that laboured in the vineyard of the Lord from the very first hour. Nay, it may happen that we

surpass them by many degrees ; for we read in this day's Gospel, "The last shall be first, and the first last;" which means that those who betake themselves late to the service of the Lord, very often, by a great fervency of spirit, a pure and exalted love of God, and a constant application to do all the good that comes in their way, rise to a higher degree of virtue and godliness, acquire greater merits, and, of consequence, become entitled to a greater share of glory and happiness in the kingdom of God than those who serve him from the beginning, but with negligence, tepidity, and slothfulness of spirit.

Should not this consideration alone, Christians, spur us on to the practice of virtue and piety? But what should still urge us more powerfully thereto, is the following words of Christ Jesus—"many are called, but few chosen." Deluded by a fatal indolence, we are apt to flatter ourselves safe : and rest as though secured with regard to salvation. Born in the bosom of the Catholic Church, professing the faith of Christ, enjoying daily the benefits of religion, prayer, the sacraments, and the sacrifices ; yet Christ Jesus assures us, that though many are called, yet but few are chosen. Are we, Christians, of the number of those that are called and chosen? Or of those that are only called and not chosen? This is, Christians, a mystery impenetrable to all mankind. One thing, however, is certain, that if we work strenuously in the vineyard of the Lord ; that is, fulfil faithfully the law of God ; if we avoid evil and do good, we certainly will receive the reward of all true and faithful servants—the grace of God in this life, and eternal happiness in the next. Amen.

SEXAGESIMA.

IT was the custom of the learned of old, in the eastern parts of the world, to speak by parables ; that is, by figures and comparisons. The prophets, and even Christ Jesus himself, was pleased to make use of the same manner of conveying his thoughts and delivering his instructions to the people ; and although the figures under which the moral instructions were couched were plain and intelligible of themselves, yet as they were addressed to a very ignorant crowd, they frequently stood in need of explanation. And this is the reason, Christians, why the disciples of our Lord entreat him, in the Gospel of this day, to expound the parable of the sower, or husbandman, that went out to sow his seed. To his disciples

he granted the explanation they sought for ; because, as he says himself, "it was given unto them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God;" but at the same time refused explaining the parable to the crowd, "that seeing, they might not see, and hearing, they might not understand."

This is indeed a most dreadful declaration ; inasmuch as it plainly imports that the words of life, Christ Jesus was publishing aloud, were to make no impression on the minds of the greater part of his hearers ; so that what was to be to others a source of life, was to be unto them a source of eternal perdition. But what was the cause, Christians, of this extraordinary proceeding on the side of Christ Jesus ? Was it owing to want of charity or benevolence towards the crowd ? Undoubtedly it was not, as he was daily informing them of the ways, and dispensing amongst them the words of eternal life. What, then, was it owing to ? To the perverseness of his hearers, who had already abused many of his instructions, and would likewise abuse the explanation of the parable mentioned in the Gospel of this day. Christ Jesus was willing to give them sufficient, nay, abundant light to distinguish the ways of heaven, and attain to eternal happiness ; but would not continually be throwing pearls before swine, as he styles it himself ; or, in other words, continually lavish the most valuable graces on persons who showed themselves unworthy of them in the highest degree.

These valuable graces he reserved for his own immediate disciples, who, he knew, would make the proper use of them ; and one of these graces was the explanation of the parable in question : wherefore he let his disciples know, that the seed which the sower or husbandman went out to sow, was the word of God ; and consequently the sower or husbandman, the Son of God, who by himself or his apostles dispersed the words of life all over the world ; the ground in which the seed was sown, are the persons that hear the divine word ; that a great part of the seed is lost, either by falling on the way side, where it is trodden upon, and picked up by the birds of the air ; or on stony ground, where it has neither moisture enough to nurture it, nor earth enough to take root ; or amidst thorns, where it is choked up, and hindered from coming to maturity : that is, as our blessed Saviour has explained it, that the heavenly seed of the divine word is often lost in the hearts of those that hear it ; either by the suggestions of the evil spirit that banish the instructions from their minds, and root them from their hearts ; or the sterility and corruption of their own nature, which doth not nourish the divine word, but rather lets it wither and

decay; or the cares and riches and pleasures of this world, which stifle the divine word within them, and hinder it from shooting into fruit.

And is not this visibly the case with a great many of ourselves? How often, Christians, has the heavenly seed of the divine word been sown in our heart? How many instructions have we received from our very infancy, upon the duties and obligations of religion, the love of God, the fear of the Lord, and the observance of his holy law? A thousand times the saving truths of salvation have been laid before us, in the clearest and strongest light. A thousand times have we been told of the necessity of serving God; the rewards he has promised to all those that love and serve him; and the eternal torments he has decreed against all the guilty transgressors of his law. But what fruit has this divine seed produced in our hearts? Did it yield a hundred fold, like that part of the seed which fell upon rich and fruitful ground? Or did it not rather wither immediately and decay, through our own neglect and ungodliness? During these instructions, we propose within ourselves, to be ever more faithful to God and our duty; but the instruction is no sooner ended than we return to our former ways. Let us, therefore, humble ourselves in the presence of Almighty God, and acknowledge with confusion, sorrow, and compunction, the ill use we have made of the manifold instructions we have received, during the whole course of our lives, with regard to salvation. For these instructions, Christians, are so many graces which the Almighty has graciously granted us, in preference to thousands of others, who certainly would have turned them to the greatest advantage for their souls; and, consequently, graces we must answer for at the tribunal of God. What answers, Christians, will we be able to make unto the Almighty God, when he shall bring us to an account for the many instructions we have received, in point of religion, virtue, and devotion, during the whole course of our lives? Shall we not then meet with the same reproaches which Christ Jesus made formerly to the Jews, who took little notice of the words of life he had so often delivered unto them, saying, "Woe be unto you, inhabitants of Corozain! If the same signs which have been wrought amongst you, had been performed in Tyre and in Sidon, the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon had long since wrought penance in sackcloth and ashes."

What, then, have we to do, Christians! 1st—We are to look upon the word as the most powerful means of conversion and sanctification, as a heavenly seed, which the Almighty

God sows in our hearts, to make them bring forth the most precious and abundant fruits of justice and godliness. In fact, is it not by the word of God that the whole world has been brought over to the Christian faith? Is it not by the word of God that thousands of sinners are daily converted and reclaimed? Is it not by the word of God the ignorant are instructed, the learned improved, the lukewarm animated and enlivened, the feeble strengthened, and the just incited to higher degrees of perfection and godliness? Banish the word of God from Christian society, and what a state of error, ignorance, and depravity must they not fall into? The word of God may, therefore, be deemed, as it in reality is, the very life and soul of religion. 2nd.—We are to receive the word of God “with a good heart,” as it is set forth in the Gospel of the day; that is, willingly, cheerfully, and with a strong and sincere resolution of practising the instructions we receive. Otherwise we certainly abuse one of the greatest gifts of God, which will render us accountable to his justice, and draw upon us his severest punishments. “Take heed how you hear the word,” saith our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, “for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, even that which he thinketh he hath shall be taken away from him;” that is, whosoever maketh a proper use of the word he heard, to him shall be given new graces; and whoever hath not made the proper use of the word he received, shall be deprived of the advantages he already has, and the graces he was to receive in consequence of the divine word. Is not this, Christians, a most dreadful declaration? To lose, and be deprived of the graces of God we already had, and of the further graces and assistances that were intended for us; and all this on account of abusing or not making the proper use of the divine word! Surely no misfortune can be equal to that, by which one is deprived of the grace of God,^g and abandoned to his own natural weakness and corruption. 3rd.—We should make it a rule unto ourselves to read, every day of our lives, something in the divine word, in the books of piety, that are, or should be, in the hands of the faithful. For the word is the food and nourishment of the soul. It is the light of the mind, strength of the heart, feeds and nourishes the soul in virtue and godliness. Nothing could be more worthy the zeal and attention of a Christian parent, than to read, or make one of their children read every night, in presence of their whole family, out of the lives of the saints, or some other pious book, for about a quarter of an hour. Reading in public would make the improvement general. The

parents, the children, the domestics, would benefit alike thereby. Incited by the example of others, they would not only receive the word with joy, but likewise make it yield a hundred-fold ; or in other words, bring forth such plentiful fruits of justice, as must entitle them to the greatest rewards in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

QUINQUAGESIMA.

As the Jews expected that the Messiah promised unto Israel would come with great majesty and splendour, and by his temporal grandeur restore the kingdom of Israel to its ancient glory and elevation, it was necessary to undeceive them by degrees, and let them know his kingdom was not of this world, and that all the glory and magnificence that should attend his reign, as was foretold by the prophets, concerned only the spiritual empire he was to establish upon earth, and the immortal glory he was to purchase by his sufferings and death in the kingdom of heaven ; for the apostle St. Paul says : " It was necessary Christ Jesus should suffer, and by that means enter into the glory of God." It was necessary to let them know that he should be "a hidden God," as the prophet Isaiah foretold ; that is, that he should appear in a state of obscurity, humiliation, abjection, persecution, and oppression. It was for this purpose that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, took frequent opportunities of entertaining his disciples with his future humiliations and sufferings. For we read in the Gospel of this day, that taking his disciples apart, he spoke to them in the following manner : " Behold we are now going up to Jerusalem, where all things shall be accomplished, that have been written by the prophets of the Son of Man. 'He shall be delivered up to the Gentiles ; he shall be mocked, scourged, and spit upon ; and after being scourged they shall put him to death ; and the third day he shall rise again.'" But his disciples, the Gospel says, understood not the words of Christ, nor did they conceive the meaning of what he said. As their prejudices were very strong in favour of his temporal grandeur and prosperity, they could not imagine he would ever appear in the greatest obscurity and humiliation ; wherefore they concluded within themselves that there was something mysterious in the words of Christ, which they could not, at least would not, comprehend.

Is not this, Christians, a genuine image and lively expression of what passes daily amongst ourselves ? Should the ministers

of Christ set forth and enforce, with all the zeal they are masters of, the necessity of practising the great virtues Christ Jesus was pleased to consecrate in his person, and make the very foundation of religion—humility, self-denial, resignation amidst afflictions and sufferings—should, I say, the ministers of Christ set forth and enforce unto the faithful these great and indispensable virtues, they understand not these things, nor can they conceive the meaning thereof. A man in some power and elevation cannot conceive what it is to humble himself continually under the powerful hand of God, and deem himself as nothing in the eyes of the Lord.

A man in affluence or opulence cannot conceive what it is to deny himself the pleasures and gratifications that surround him on every side, and which he has it every moment in his power to procure. A man in adversity cannot conceive how afflictions are the greatest blessings that heaven can bestow; as they are the most effectual means of weaning us from sinful ways, of satisfying and atoning for our past sins and transgressions, and the properest occasion of testifying unto God, our Lord and our Maker, the submission due to his supreme power and will.

Nothing, however, can be more certain than that these virtues are the most essential points of religion; that they are prescribed by the law, and have been made sacred in the person of Christ Jesus. What therefore every Christian should do, in the first place, is to conceive the meaning of these important words of Christ Jesus, "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart. If anyone will be my disciple, let him deny himself." And again, "Not one can be my disciple that does not take up his cross and follow me." What, I say, every Christian should do, in the first place, is, to conceive the meaning of these important words of Christ; and next, to convince himself, in his own breast, of the indispensable obligation he lies under of practising these virtues, in order to attain eternal happiness. For as Christ Jesus is the model and pattern of all virtues, it is plain no man can be saved that does not tread in his steps. And this is the reason why St. Paul says, that "whom God has predestinated to eternal happiness, he hath likewise decreed to make them conformable unto the image of his only Son." Wherefore, Christians, as the life of Christ Jesus was one continued scene of humiliation, self-denial, and suffering, we must resolve upon making our own lives an expression of his, by humility, abnegation, and resignation under the severest pressures and calamities of this world. Otherwise, we can have no hope of

sharing in the rewards he has promised unto those who shall live up to his maxims, and follow his examples. For St. Paul says, no man is glorified with Christ Jesus that has not partaken of the sufferings of Christ Jesus.

After Christ Jesus had informed his disciples of his approaching humiliations and sufferings, he set out with them upon his journey to Jerusalem; and it happened as they were drawing near unto Jericho, they met a blind man begging near the way side, who, the moment he heard from the crowd it was Jesus of Nazareth that was passing by, cried out and said, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." These words he repeated over and over with a loud voice, and eagerness of desire, insomuch, that he at length became troublesome to the crowd, who thought it proper to check his importunities, and if possible reduce him to silence. But the more he was checked, the more he cried out aloud, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me," so great was his confidence in Christ Jesus, and so ardent his desire of recovering his sight. Nor was he any-ways deceived in his expectations; for the moment Christ Jesus heard him, he ordered him to be brought before him, and said, "What wilt thou have me do for thee?" To which the blind man answering, said, "Lord, that I receive my sight." Then Jesus said unto him, "Receive thy sight; thy faith has made thee sound." And the man immediately received his sight, and followed Jesus, glorifying God, and the whole multitude along with him.

This blind man, the holy fathers say, is an image of all those who continually gratify their passions upon earth, in open violation of the divine law. In fact, Christians, what can argue a greater blindness, than to prefer the empty pleasures of this life, which last but a single moment, to the pure, substantial, and everlasting joys of the kingdom of heaven—the riches of this world, which must shortly perish and decay, to the incorruptible treasures of heaven—the honours and distinctions of this life, which are nothing in themselves, to the immortal crowns of glory reserved for us in the kingdom of heaven! What can argue a greater blindness, than to know we may die every moment, and yet live in such a state as, that if we chance to die therein, we must be forever excluded from the kingdom of God, and condemned forever to the devouring flames of hell? What can argue a greater blindness than to expect the Almighty God will forgive us, at the last hour, the manifold transgressions of a long and iniquitous life; and besides, admit us into the kingdom of heaven, as he has assured us himself of the reverse

in holy writ, saying, "I have called upon you, (that is, by my holy grace,) and you have refused to answer my call; the day shall therefore come, when you shall seek me, and shall not find me, and you shall die in your sins." What can argue a greater blindness, in a word, than to believe there is a God above us, who will bring us to account for all the views and transactions of our life, and condemn all sinners to everlasting punishment; and yet live in such a manner as if virtue were vice, and our vicious actions and transgressions alone were to be rewarded, not punished?

Every sinner, therefore, is most justly compared to the blind man mentioned in the Gospel of this day; as he is in reality blind to all the true interests and concerns of his soul. However, the blind man in question recovered his sight from Christ Jesus. But shall those amongst us that are blind to the interests of their souls, ever acquire a true sense of their blindness, or a true knowledge of their errors? Shall they ever see the miseries they are in—the dangers they are exposed to—the dreadful and lamentable end that must terminate all their sinful courses of life—shall they ever pass from the darkness of iniquity to the true light of justice and righteousness? They should indeed, Christians, did they make a proper application, for that purpose, unto Christ Jesus, like the blind man mentioned in the Gospel of this day. For Christ is the heavenly light—"the true light," St. John says, "which enlightens every man who cometh into this world."

Let us, therefore, most earnestly beseech our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, to open our eyes; to give us a thorough sense of the littleness, insignificance, and nothingness of everything that is created; the value and excellence of all that is eternal and divine—to make us sensible of the folly and extravagance of forfeiting every title to the kingdom of heaven, for a moment's pleasure upon earth. In a word, to know our errors and correct them. In order to this, let us say with the royal prophet, "Enlighten our eyes, O Lord, lest they be closed in death, and sealed in eternal darkness. Make known unto us the ways we are to walk in, because we have lifted up our souls unto thee, O Lord!" It is not riches, or pleasures, or distinctions we call for, but the light of thy holy grace—that light which alone is capable of dispelling the clouds of darkness that hang over our minds; of guiding safely our steps in the intricate ways that lead to life, and giving us at length admittance to that immortal glory, and that splendour which springs forth incessantly in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

THE spirit by which Christ Jesus was led into the desert, was his own Divine Spirit, or the Spirit of God ; and the motive which induced him to retire into the desert or wilderness, was, that he should stand exposed to the temptations of the devil ; and that, Christians, for our instruction and consolation. For when we see the Son of God tempted, in various shapes, by the evil spirit, surely no one should be surprised to meet with the like temptations within himself. However, we are not to imagine that all our temptations come immediately from the evil spirit. No : they mostly arise from ourselves, and have their source in the corruption of our human nature, or that concupiscence, or strong propensity to evil, which is born with us, and is one of the penalties of original sin, or the sin of our first parents. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied but the evil spirit doth frequently interfere, and urge us powerfully to sin, by painting seducing images in our ideas, and creating evil suggestions in our minds ; for, "our great enemy the devil," St. Peter says, "is continually roaming about, seeking whom to devour." And the apostle St. Paul says, "every man is tempted by himself, drawn and enticed by his own concupiscence." From these several considerations—the weakness and depravity of human nature, in general, the gaudy show and seducing figure of this world, the hatred and malice of the evil spirit to all mankind, it is plain we must be tempted, and frequently and violently tempted, during the whole course of our lives. But what should comfort us, Christians, is, 1st—That temptation is not a sin ; which appears plainly from the example of Christ Jesus, who suffered himself to be tempted by the evil spirit in the desert. It is only an excitement to sin, not sin itself. 2ndly—It is in our power always, by the grace of God, to resist and overcome the strongest temptations ; for "God is faithful," St. Paul says, "and will not suffer you to be tempted beyond your strength ; but will give you, in the very temptation, strength enough to resist it." The evil spirit, St. Austin says, is like a furious dog at his chain. He may bark, and threaten, and attack ; but he can never hurt you, if you do not go within his reach. The misfortune is, that people seldom or never take any pains to resist the temptation. They yield the moment they are attacked, at least they make but a very weak resistance ; and then they think it a sufficient excuse to say, I had not the grace to resist the temptation. But this, Christians, is a very great, and a very prejudicial mistake ; because we always have

sufficient grace to do our duty, and can have, by means of prayer, or an humble and fervent application to God, further helps to enable us to overcome any temptation whatsoever; so that if we fall without resisting the temptation, it is entirely owing to ourselves, and not to the want of grace. What should comfort us, in the third place, is, that every temptation we resist and overcome, from a motive of religion, adds to our merit upon earth, and to our rewards in heaven. For the apostle says, "Happy the man that suffers temptation; because, that after being tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which God had promised to those that love him." What we then have to do, Christians, in the time of temptation, is, to bear up strongly against it, to call on the Almighty God, through the merits of Christ Jesus, for further assistance; to bring unto our aid some of the great principles of religion, the joys of heaven, the eternal torments of hell, the command that God has laid upon us of loving and serving him alone; saying, with Christ Jesus in the desert, "Begone, Satan; for it is written, The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve."

Before Christ Jesus would suffer himself to be tempted by the evil spirit in the desert, he was pleased to fast forty days and forty nights; after which he grew hungry, as the Gospel says: and this, Christians, was undoubtedly to set us the example of fasting, and show us how we are to prepare and arm ourselves against the various temptations of life. It is in imitation of this fast of Christ Jesus that the Lent has been instituted in the Church from the very beginning; and enforced by a particular command, which obliges all those that have attained to the age of one-and-twenty, or thereabouts, under pain of mortal sin. The solemn fast of Lent has been placed in this season of the year, chiefly to dispose the faithful for the great solemnity of Easter. As there is an obligation upon all the faithful who are grown up to the years of discretion to receive the Blessed Sacrament at Easter, the Church employs the most effectual methods to prepare them properly for that purpose; such as fasting, praying, humiliation, and alms—the very exercises peculiar to the holy season we are entering upon.

For be pleased to consider, that all the faithful in general may be divided into two classes—those that are in a state of grace, and those that are in a state of sin. To those that are in a state of sin, nothing can be more profitable than fasting, as the virtue and efficacy thereof are declared in many places in holy writ: for the Lord says in the second chapter of Joel,

“Convert unto me in fasting and weeping ;” moreover, Christ Jesus says, “There is a kind of evil spirit that cannot be expelled but by fasting and prayer.” And the reason of this, as divines observe, is, that the Almighty God, to deter us the more from sin, is not pleased to grant at once unto every sinner the grace of repentance ; but requires that we humble ourselves in his presence, by fasting, weeping, and prayer. But when we do humble our souls in this manner—when we fast and weep, and pray, in a spirit of repentance, and with a view to the merits of Christ Jesus, the Almighty never refuses to grant us the grace of a true and solid conversion.

This is the reason, Christians, why Lent has been looked upon, by the fathers and doctors of the Church, as a season of spiritual blessings ; because it is a time set apart for humiliation, fasting, and prayer, which are the most powerful methods religion can suggest for returning sincerely unto the Lord, *Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile*. And as for those that may be in a state of grace, or in favour with Almighty God, nothing can be more useful or meritorious than fasting : for first, “Prayer,” the Holy Ghost declares, (Tob. 12) “is good with fasting ;” whence it plainly appears that prayer derives great virtue and efficacy from fasting. Second—Christ Jesus has promised a particular reward to fasting ; for we read in the Gospel, that he addressed his disciples in manner following, “When you fast, be not of a sad countenance, like hypocrites ; for they disfigure their faces, that to men they may appear fasting. Amen, I say unto you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou dost fast, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not fasting unto men, but to thy Heavenly Father, who is in private ; and thy Heavenly Father, who is in private, will reward thee.” Here is then a reward promised unto fasting ; from which it appears, that fasting is one of the most meritorious works of religion. Fasting, the holy fathers say, enlightens the mind and purifies the heart. It banishes all idle imaginations, and suppresses all evil desires. It weans the soul from all unlawful pleasures, and disposes it to enter into the most intimate union and communication with the Divinity.

Let us therefore, Christians, deem it a happiness to have lived to this holy season ; and firmly resolve within ourselves, to go through it with fidelity and courage. Let us not only fast, but fast in the manner prescribed by the Church, abstaining punctually from all sort of forbidden food, and contenting ourselves with one single meal, and a slender, very slender refection at night. Should we transgress any one of these points,

we commit a mortal sin. Let us not only fast, but fast with a spirit of religion, by offering up our fast in union with the fast of Christ Jesus, to atone for our past sins. The spirit may indeed tempt us to transgress and break the fast, as he did Christ Jesus in the desert, saying—"Command that those stones be made bread." But remember what our Saviour answered, "It is not by bread alone man liveth; but by every word that cometh from the mouth of God."

This is, perhaps, the last Lent a great many of us will ever see. Let us therefore make the proper use of it, and turn it to the greatest advantage unto our souls. By keeping this Lent properly, we can obtain the grace of God, which is undoubtedly beyond all the treasures upon earth, atone for our past sins and transgressions, and make great additions to the rewards that are prepared for us in the life to come. On the contrary, if we do not keep the Lent, and keep it properly; if upon slender pretences we sue for, and make use of any exemption, or dispensation from fasting, we commit a very heinous sin in the eyes of the Lord, deprive ourselves of his holy grace, and add to the treasure of wrath that is reserved for us in the life to come. Fasting, I own, is not agreeable to flesh and blood; but it is wholesome for the soul, and agreeable to God. It weakens the constitution, but then it checks and lowers the passions. It deprives us of many sensual gratifications; but it procures us many spiritual and inestimable blessings. It destroys the terrestrial part of man; but it forms, strengthens, and perfects the spiritual and celestial part.

What advantages these, Christians, and how worthy our attention? Let us therefore enter upon this laborious career of fasting and penance, with spirit and resolution. "The Almighty will finish and bring to perfection," the apostle says, "what he hath already begun with his holy grace;" and thereby enable us to reap, in the end, the happy fruits of our long and penitential course—his holy grace in this life, and eternal happiness in the next. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

It was usual with our Saviour, as often as he preached up the cross to his disciples, to remind them of the rewards reserved for them in the life to come; in order that the hopes of the recompense might excite their courage to bear up against the hardships they were continually to struggle with. But on this occasion, Christians, he does more—to some of them he shows

a glimpse of the beatific vision of that glory he enjoyed before the formation of the world. "And leading them up into a high mountain, he was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun; and his garments became white as snow. And lo! a voice cried out from the heavens, saying—'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.'" Enraptured with the glory that surrounded him, and equally unmindful of past as of future sufferings, Peter breaks out, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." Such are the hints conveyed by the Scripture of the glory of heaven, from the transfiguration of Christ on the mountain. His countenance became brilliant like the sun, and his garments like snow; because in nature nothing is whiter than snow, nor more brilliant than the sun. They are figurative words, inexpressive of that reality, the contemplation of which should support us under the calamities annexed to this life, and make us look with disdain upon the gaudy appearance of this world, and solicit only a slender "portion in the land of the living." But who is it that thinks seriously of the eternal concerns of his soul? Grown terrestrial by the indulgence of our senses, the pursuits of this world and its vanities, the very notion of heaven seems banished from our minds. The Gospel everywhere tells you, that heaven is a reward; to obtain it, you must take care to merit it upon earth; unless you merit, you will not obtain it; and to encourage you to merit it, the Church invites you, this day, to some reflections on it, and reminds you how worthy it is of all your labours.

The contemplation of heaven has been, in all ages, the support and comfort of all the followers of God. It is called in the Apocalypse, "the holy Jerusalem," whose walls are built of precious stones—its streets paved with pure gold—the river of life runs through it, and on its banks springs up the tree, whose fruit conveys immortality and health—where "night shall be no more; and they shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them; and they shall reign for ever and ever!" This is but a faint idea of what heaven is, adapted to what we conceive most valuable upon earth, as pure gold and precious stones; for St. Paul, after being elevated to the throne of God, could only declare, "the eye hath not seen, nor the ear ever heard, nor the heart of man ever conceived, what God hath prepared for those that love him." The impossibility this eloquent and inspired apostle lay under of explaining it, should convey the highest notion of its grandeur; for God there shows himself a God, in the rewards he bestows on his

friends : "I myself am your protector and your very great reward." All other happiness but that of heaven is deceitful from its uncertainty, its fluctuation, and its shortness. Felicity in this life is extremely uncertain, but it is grounded, in heaven, on the surest foundations—here it is vain and superficial, there solid and substantial ; here fleeting, there permanent ; here momentary, there eternal.

"There can be no real happiness," says St. Austin, *de Civ. Dei*, lib. 20, "where there is the least doubt"—and is not doubt interwoven with all the happiness of this world ? Where is the man that can safely rely on his attaining even to a share of that felicity which this mortal life affords ? Consult those who have laboured many years in the pursuit of honour : after exposing themselves to the hazards of war, after courting perhaps the occasions of spilling their blood, what reward have they received ? Very often ingratitude or ill-will ; their greatest services frequently over-looked, or their fidelity questioned. Consult those, who, placing their felicity in rank and distinction, make them the objects of their pursuits. After employing all the arts their vanity could suggest, to raise themselves to the highest stations, what success do they generally meet with ? Instead of compassing their ambitious views, for the most part, disappointment and shame to see themselves supplanted and depressed by those very persons whom they intended to leave at the greatest distance behind them. Let us likewise consult those who place their happiness in riches, how far they succeed in their designs, in laying down many well concerted schemes, and pursuing them with the greatest vigilance and care. They frequently meet with one continued scene of misfortunes, which, from the greatest opulence, bring them down to the lowest degree of indigence and obscurity. Hence it is plain, that nothing can be more uncertain than the happiness of this world ; and this is the common course of things in life. The images it presents us with are enough to allure from afar, and seduce any one that is not guarded against them, by the principles of faith, or the strongest reflections. Its pomp and figure, its shows and diversions, its pleasures and amusements, shine refulgently at a distance ; but upon examination they are found to be no better than painted clouds, which have scarce any existence, or those gentle fires that kindle in the night, retire before you as fast as you pursue them, and afford no more of their malignant light, than what is sufficient to point out the way to your destruction. On the other hand, we have all the certainty we can require in the promise of

God, who, being essential truth, can neither deceive nor be deceived. This God, I say, has promised a share of his kingdom and of that glory he himself enjoys, unto all his faithful servants, which promise is so certain as to form a fundamental article in our creed—life everlasting. Almighty God has not only promised, but fulfilled his promise to all those who were entitled thereto; for the just that have lived upon earth, and atoned sufficiently for their slightest offences, are now in possession of the kingdom of heaven in virtue of God's promise; as laid down by St. John, "and I saw a great multitude which no man could reckon, of all tribes and countries and nations," in the actual enjoyment of the glory of God. What greater encouragement can there be to a pious and Christian life, than to know that it leads surely to happiness? In every other pursuit we are liable to disappointment; but here we have the infallible promise of God to depend on, as surely as the Almighty is unchangeable in his nature, and infallible in his word, so sure is the possession of eternal happiness to those that are really deserving of it.

This dependence on the promise of a God supported and animated the courage of the martyrs amidst the most cruel torments—some were stretched upon the rack, others plunged into caldrons of melted lead or boiling oil; some were roasted, others torn with hooks, and laid on burning coals; yet when they lifted up their eyes towards heaven, to contemplate the rewards of their fidelity, they could endure all these tortures, not only with courage and resolution, but with ecstasy and delight. This dependence on the promise of a God led many thousands, in all ages, from the pleasures of the world into the wildest deserts, there to spend there lives in solitude, prayer, fasting, mortification, and penance. The severest austerities seemed unto them light and agreeable, because they knew the joys of heaven were to be their reward. This dependence, likewise, on the promise of a God, induces many thousands, even in our own days, in all Christian countries, either to renounce the world entirely, or "to live in the world as though they were not in it," and employ themselves entirely in the practices of good works, because they know that heaven is to be their reward. This dependence on the promise of a God, and the expectation of eternal happiness in heaven, should make the like impressions on our minds. Most of you have been labouring in this world for many years. For what purpose? Where is the fruit of all your labours—at least where will it be in a few years, perhaps a few days hence—what more will then remain of all the glory and happiness of

this life, but a handful of dust and ashes? Turn your thoughts, therefore, upon heaven, where your reward is not only sure but solid and substantial, abounding in felicity.

All the happiness of this life, when weighed in the scale of reason, what does it amount to? A transient pause, a slight cessation from pain. Can it satisfy the mind, or content our desires? Does it not rather leave after it a constant craving for something better, or more agreeable? Consult your own experience. All your past pleasures, your diversions, amusements, rioting and joys, what did they all avail you the moment they were passed? Far from affording any real satisfaction, did they not leave behind the cruel remorse of having wasted your time, impaired your circumstances, defiled your conscience, and offended Almighty God?—whence it follows, there neither is, nor can be, any real happiness upon earth; and that by a particular providence of God, as St. Austin observes, who framed our hearts in such a manner as not to be able to fix or settle in any object but himself alone. But in heaven it is quite the reverse. There we are to enjoy the height of felicity by all that gratifies the mind or sense. Here below, even those who seem to enjoy the completest happiness, are perpetually disturbed either by the restlessness of their own minds, which is a cross we necessarily carry about us, or the frame of their constitution, which is essentially liable to sickness, the inclemency of the seasons, the feebleness and dissolution of age—so that we may justly say with the wisest of men, that all the happiness this world affords, is no more at bottom than “vanity and affliction of spirit.” But in heaven, I say, there are neither anxieties, nor sufferings, nor complaint, nor moan, nor anguish, nor sorrow; there the tears shall be wiped away from your eyes, to make way for the torrent of delights which flow from the throne of God—there you shall see “face to face” HIM, whom here below you adore through faith. There the fountains of the living God, shall pour forth on your torrents of delights, ever now, ever increasing, never cloying. There, after the resurrection, the faithful companion of the soul on earth, the sharer of its sufferings, the partner of its good works—the body shall partake in its joys. The eye shall be delighted with the view of God, and the beauty and grandeur of the heavenly Jerusalem, and all its illustrious inhabitants; the ear enchanted with melodious canticles of praise; and the heart drowned in ecstasy of joys, which necessarily flow from an immediate union with God. But listen, Christians—the glory of heaven is never to end!

No happiness can be deemed complete that is limited in its

duration, because the time must necessarily come when it will cease to exist. But this danger is removed with regard to heaven ; as it is to last as long as God himself, that is, for ever and ever. For the Gospel says, "the just shall go at the last day to eternal life." Conceive then, if you can, how grand is that state, wherein joys infinitely superior to anything this world can administer, must flow for ever without interruption or end. Already near 1800 years have passed since those who ascended with Christ into heaven have been in possession of the glory he purchased for them ; and in eighteen hundred millions of years, their happiness will not be so much as beginning ; because in eternity there is neither beginning nor end ; and that their happiness, like unto that of God himself, always subsists uniformly without variation or limitation. What is become, let me ask, of all the great and happy men, that lived eighteen hundred years ago in the world, "who placed not their glory in the glory of God?" The monuments erected to their fame, are mouldered into dust, their actions forgotten, their names buried in oblivion, and all their glories vanished like a shadow.

Consider now, Christians, the joys of heaven are the precious reward of a godly life. Consider, I beseech you, the terrible words of St. Paul, "Neither drunkards nor revilers, the effeminate or covetous, shall ever inherit the kingdom of God." To enter heaven, you must fulfil the law upon earth, as Christ Jesus directs, "If thou hast a mind to enter into eternal life keep the commandments." Now the whole law consists in avoiding every excess, and fulfilling all righteousness, so as to exercise piety towards God, justice and charity towards our neighbour, sobriety and reservedness towards ourselves. This is the only way to heaven. Whoever pursues any other road, goes the broad way to perdition. This is the "crown of justice" which must be won by many victories over our enemies, the flesh, the world, and the spirit of darkness. The conflict may be sharp and severe ; but, by the grace of God, victory will always declare for us. Nothing can be deemed sharp or severe which leads to eternal happiness, and makes us masters of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is offered to those who live up to the rules of Christianity. Let us endeavour to obtain it. Who can complain of the hardship of a few moments which are productive of an eternal weight of glory in heaven ? Let us forsake our wicked ways, and give our hearts sincerely unto the Lord, and he will abundantly repay us in his own kingdom hereafter.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

CAN anything be more surprising, Christians, than the obstinacy and fury with which the Pharisees persecuted Christ Jesus? Every action of his life was to them an occasion of exerting their fury and malice. Even those actions which carried with them the most visible character and stamp of godliness, could not escape their censure; for we read in this day's Gospel, that after Christ Jesus had cast out, in their presence, a devil that was dumb, they cried out immediately and said it was in "Beelzebub, the prince of devils," or by virtue of a power derived from him, that Jesus had cast out the evil spirit. Although nothing could be more absurd than this assertion, as it could never be conceived that the prince of the devils would employ his own power, or suffer it to be employed to his own ruin and destruction—and "as every kingdom that is divided in itself," as our Saviour says, "must fall into desolation;" yet the Pharisees did not, would not conceive it; whilst the crowd was struck with admiration, at the miracle that was wrought before their eyes, and upon seeing the man who had been dumb for many years, in consequence of the evil spirit he was possessed with, open his lips and speak freely. The Pharisees, on the contrary, were filled with indignation, and used their utmost endeavours to blacken the reputation of Christ Jesus, to prevent any glory that might result from it, by attributing the miracle to the power of the prince of darkness; so great was their prejudice and prepossession against the Son of God and Redeemer of mankind!

From this passage we may learn what dreadful consequences attend the passion of envy and malice, and how destructive a thing it is for any one to suffer himself to be led or governed thereby. In the Pharisees it went so far, as to attack the very person of Christ Jesus, and load him with the most severe aspersions. In us it does not go so far indeed, but how often does it prompt a great many to attack the members of Christ, or their brethren in Christ, by censuring them unjustly, or making them the subject of slander and detraction.

This is, Christians, one of the most prevailing vices, not only of this country, but of all the countries upon the earth; and what is still worse, is, that the people generally seem not to make the least account thereof; yet detraction is undoubtedly a very heinous crime—a mortal sin, and a very considerable transgression of the law of God; for St. Paul declares "that detractors are hateful to God." Now nothing can make us hateful to God, but a material breach of his law; besides,

the same Gospel says, that "all those that do detract, will never enter the kingdom of heaven," from whence it plainly follows, that detraction or slander must be a most heinous sin and transgression, inasmuch as it is capable of excluding us for ever from the kingdom of heaven.

But what does slander or detraction consist in? It consists, Christians, in saying or revealing anything that may hurt your neighbour's character. It differs from a calumny in this, that by calumny you accuse your neighbour wrongfully, and charge him with a crime or fault he was never guilty of, whereas by slander or detraction you only reveal or publish such crimes or faults as he has actually been guilty of, in private, the publishing of which cannot but be a prejudice to his character. It is no excuse to say that you have advanced nothing but what is true, and strictly true. For though it was true, you had no right to publish it the moment it was private, and could be prejudicial to your neighbour; and if you have advanced a truth, that was to your neighbour's prejudice—you certainly have sinned, and grievously sinned; and that, divines say, against charity and justice. 1st—Against charity, because the law of charity requires that you treat your neighbour as you would be treated by him yourself. Now let me ask, if you would be well pleased if your neighbour published your faults, your most secret faults, or failings, and thereby exposed you to the censure of the public?—undoubtedly not. Why then will you not behave towards him as you would have him behave towards you, upon a like occasion? And if you do not, most certainly you transgress the second great precept of the law, or that precept which enjoins you to love your neighbour as yourself. 2nd—It is a sin against justice, for a man's character is his property, as much as anything he may be possessed of; nay, by far the most valuable part of his property—as a good name is valued more by all persons of principle, than all the riches of the world. If, therefore, Christians, you take away any part of your neighbour's character, you strip him in reality of the richest possession he is master of, which manifestly is a breach of justice.

Seeing, therefore, Christians, detraction is so heinous a sin, is it not astonishing that people who pretend to have the fear of God before them, and to act upon principles of conscience, should so frequently be guilty of it? How many are there in the world that would die before they would think of robbing their neighbour of any part of his worldly substance, yet make no difficulty in robbing him of what is vastly more to be esteemed—the good opinion of the world. Their neighbour is

eternally the subject of their discourse—the moment they hear anything to his discredit, they can have no rest until they disclose the deadly secret to the first they meet. The real or pretended crime is handed about from house to house, until it spreads through the whole town, and from the town throughout the country ; thus it is, a Christian is frequently destroyed and decried, and that by the uncharitableness, the indiscretion, or the criminal slander of other Christians, for which they must account at the bar of God's justice.

But is it not a sin to repeat what one has heard to the prejudice of their neighbour? Undoubtedly it is a very great sin ; first, because all general reports are commonly found, upon examination, to be groundless ; and surely it can never be lawful to do real and certain injury, upon a flying and uncertain report. Secondly—Although the imputation were certain and well grounded, yet if the crime is private, and may become prejudicial to your neighbour, you are bound in conscience, and in charity to our brother in Christ, not to speak of it. If the imputation was certain and public, it alters the case ; because one loses and forfeits, in that case, all the right he had to the good opinion of mankind. Further, it frequently happens that persons are guilty of detraction, although they should not say one word, and that by approving or encouraging the detraction with a wink, nod, shrug, smile, affected pause or stop ; for St. Paul says, "Not only detractors, but likewise those that consent to the detraction, shall be excluded for ever from the kingdom of heaven."

You see, Christians, how easy it is for one to commit a considerable sin in point of detraction, since we become guilty by the very encouragement we give thereto. How, then, is a person to behave in an occasion of the kind, wherein he sees his neighbour traduced by evil tongues? 1st—He is bound in conscience not to join in the detraction, or approve of it. 2nd—He is bound in conscience, if he knows the falsehood of the imputation, to oppose it with prudence and discretion ; and thereby vindicate his neighbour's character. Our Saviour says in the Gospel of this day, "He that is not with me is against me ;" whence it follows, that it is not enough, upon several occasions, when the law of God is violated before our eyes, to be silent, or barely passive. 3rd—If it should happen that we neither know the falseness of the imputation, nor have authority enough to oppose the person that detracts, who may be of a superior rank, we are then obliged in conscience to show our dislike to the detraction, either by our silence, or a certain

severity in our countenance, or frequently by quitting the company without delay.

Detraction is not only a heinous sin, but, likewise, a sin which must be repaired and retracted publicly. 1st—For, as an act of injustice, it requires a reparation as much as if you had robbed your neighbour of his worldly substance, as far as lies in your power, either by retracting publicly the evil you have said of him, if it was a false aspersion, or by commending him in other respects, and upon other occasions, if the aspersion was true; 2nd—If your neighbour has suffered in his business or substance by your detraction, you are bound in conscience to make restitution for the losses he sustained. Without this reparation the sin will never be forgiven, although you should be fasting and praying for a hundred years.

But what is this envy, so prejudicial and destructive to mankind? It is a displeasure at the good of our neighbour, either in his person, fortune, or preferment, which, it is plain, is utterly inconsistent with the spirit of religion. As Christians, we are obliged to wish each other well; and even contribute to the welfare of others, as often as they stand in need of our assistance. Nothing, therefore, can be more repugnant to the spirit of Christianity, nor, consequently, more criminal in the sight of God, than that passion which stifles every human affection, every sentiment of benevolence, in the heart; yet how many are there that daily obey the dictates of this inhuman passion? How many are there that always hear, with dislike, their neighbour commended?—that repine at his success, and rejoice in his misfortunes? An envious eye is offended at everything that sets his neighbour above himself, and pleased at every misfortune that pulls him down to the lowest rank. Nor is this passion confined to the sentiments of the heart. No; it shows itself in our actions, but chiefly in our words. Divines assure us, that one-half of mankind are damned for detraction; for first, it is plain to every one that nothing can be more common than detraction; and second, nothing more uncommon than making the least reparation for it: whence it follows that this sin is seldom or never atoned for by repentance, and, consequently, it must bring about our eternal perdition: push us to the grave, from the grave to the tribunal of God, and from the tribunal of God to the devouring flames of hell. Should not this consideration alone, Christians, give us all the utmost abhorrence of detraction? “Happy is the man,” the apostle says, “that doth not offend with the tongue.”

Let us therefore guard these dangerous tongues, for fear of

offending our brethren, and by offending our brethren, offend Almighty God, who in punishment of our sins, will certainly exclude us from the kingdom of heaven. Let us, I say, be silent for ever, rather than speak to the prejudice of our brethren, and in open violation of the divine law. By reducing ourselves to silence for a time, from a principle of Christian charity upon earth, we shall be at liberty to employ our tongues for ever in praising and magnifying the great eternal God, amidst choirs of angels and celestial spirits, enraptured with joys and glory in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

It is hard to say and determine, Christians, which we are most to admire in the Gospel of this day—this unwearied zeal and religious dispositions of the crowd that followed Christ Jesus beyond the sea of Galilee (that is a large lake which divided Galilee from the rest of the country), or the extraordinary goodness and bounty of Christ Jesus, who was pleased to relieve the crowd in their distress, by a very signal and memorable miracle. It was very natural indeed, that those who had seen the miraculous cures which Christ Jesus wrought upon the sick, as we are told in the Gospel of this day, should have conceived, in consequence thereof, a very high opinion of his power and benevolence; but that they should quit their habitations and follow Christ Jesus in crowds into the desert, unmindful of their families, unmindful of their business, and unmindful of themselves, as numbers of the Jews did, on the occasion we are speaking of, argues plainly a very great fund of religion, and a very extraordinary attachment to the person of Christ Jesus. By this proceeding they manifestly showed that they prized and valued the instructions they received from Christ Jesus, concerning the ways of salvation, more than all the advantages of this world. To follow Christ, and share in the spiritual blessings he was daily dispensing, or distributing amongst them, was the only object of their desires. Every other consideration either gave way to this, or was entirely banished from their thoughts. “Happy are those,” says our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, “that thirst after justice, for they shall be filled;” that is, happy are those that have a sincere and ardent desire of learning the ways of heaven, and walking therein; of knowing the will of God, and fulfilling it in every point; for they shall be satisfied both in this world and in the world to come. In this world, by the inward pleasure and consolations that

necessarily attend a just and virtuous life; and in the world to come, by partaking eternally of the fullest and purest joys of the kingdom of heaven.

It was not possible, Christians, to show a greater longing after justice than that multitude had shown, which followed Christ Jesus into the desert; without making the least provision for themselves, although at the risk of perishing with famine. Are these the sentiments of our hearts? Have we the same desire, the same zeal, the same eagerness that the multitude had, for the things of God? Have we sacrificed, or are we even ready to sacrifice the least interest of this world, for the advantage of our souls? Alas! do we not daily sacrifice the eternal concerns of our souls, to the most trifling advantages of this world? What we are most uneasy about, and what we thirst after with the greatest eagerness of desire, is not the knowledge of the eternal truths of salvation, or the fulfilling of all justice, but such things as contribute to the happiness of this life; nevertheless, Christ Jesus has said, "Seek first the kingdom of heaven before all things, and the rest shall be given unto you."

This was plainly and fully verified with regard to the multitude that followed Christ Jesus into the desert; for after seating himself upon the mountain, whence he could view the whole multitude that had been fasting three days, he took pity on them, and would not dismiss them before he made them eat, lest they might perish in the way. For this purpose he inquired of his disciples how he could purchase provisions to feed the multitude that came after him. The disciples answered, that a considerable sum could not buy provisions enough to give even a small share to every one of the crowd. Another then said, there was indeed a boy that had "five barley loaves and two fishes;" but what was that to so many persons, and so great a multitude as five thousand men? Christ Jesus, however, ordered the multitude to be seated on the grass; and taking the loaves, he gave thanks, and distributed them amongst the crowd, and the fishes in like manner; and the whole multitude was plentifully fed therewith.

Everything here, Christians, is most worthy of remark. 1st—Christ Jesus was pleased, before he would work the miracle, to address his Heavenly Father, to show us that all blessings are derived from the Almighty God, the source of all goodness, and, consequently, that it is from him we are to expect, and to him we are to apply for relief, in the time of calamity or distress. This indeed we are very sensible of, with regard to any temporal want or necessity; for the moment we meet with any crosses or misfortunes in the world, we never fail calling

upon the Almighty God for relief, and reminding him of his being the tender and universal Parent of mankind. But do we behave in the same manner in reference to our spiritual wants and necessities? Do we apply to the Almighty God with the same readiness and sincerity for his divine assistance—the graces that are necessary to subdue our passions, overcome our temptations, fulfil, in a word, every essential obligation of religion? Do we beseech him fervently and frequently to refuse us, nay deprive us of everything that may be the occasion of sin, and an obstacle to our salvation? No: this is seldom or never the case; nevertheless, spiritual blessings are the only things that the Almighty God has promised to grant us, as appears from these words of our blessed Saviour in the Gospel—“Whatsoever you ask according to the will of my Father, shall be granted you;” because nothing can be agreeable to the will of God, but what is conducive to our salvation. As for temporal blessings, the Almighty never promised them, but with some restrictions; nor is it lawful for us to call for them but as far as they may be conducive to the glory of God, and the good of our souls. But our misfortune is, that we are more anxious for the frail and perishable advantages of this world, which we cannot frequently obtain, than for the graces of God, which are extremely valuable in themselves, and would certainly be granted if we applied for them with humility and fervour.

2nd—Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, was not satisfied with increasing the scanty share of provision his disciples had, as far as was necessary to feed the multitude; he was, moreover, pleased to produce and create such a plenty and abundance, as left a large quantity of provisions remaining, in order, as the holy fathers say, to show us how liberal and bountiful he is to all those that love and serve him. The goodness of God will not suffer him, Christians, to keep any measure with his faithful servants. He not only rewards them, but rewards them beyond their own expectations, and in a manner worthy of a God. This is what St. Paul means when he says, “Where sin abounded, grace, or goodness of God, abounded more.”

What impressions, Christians, should not these instances of divine bounty make upon our minds and hearts? Had we been witnesses to, and partakers of the miraculous relief granted to the multitude in the desert, how powerfully must we have been affected thereby! undoubtedly we should have cried out along with them, “This is the prophet indeed who was to come into the world.”

But be pleased to observe, that there is not a single day of

our lives, in which we are not witnesses to many acts of equal, if not superior goodness on the part of the Almighty. For, as St. Augustine justly observes upon this occasion, is it more astonishing the Almighty should have fed five thousand men in the desert than daily feed the whole race of mankind? Undoubtedly it is not. Yet, this he daily performs by producing the various fruits of the earth on which we live. The air we breathe, the life we enjoy, and the food we consume, are the precious and continual gifts of his bountiful hand. But these miracles of bounty, being so very common, are constantly overlooked. Yet surely the more frequent they are, the more they should be valued and prized, as they are new and accumulated proofs of the bounty of God. If one single favour of consequence is sufficient to draw our attention, and excite our admiration, what effect should continual and uninterrupted instances of divine love produce!

Let us then learn, at length, to distinguish the inexpressible bounty and goodness of the Almighty God, in all his works, and throughout the whole system of his providence. Considerations of this kind will certainly excite our hearts to a just return of gratitude and love, which will one day entitle us to all the joys and glory of the kingdom of heaven; where the Almighty God communicates, and will ever communicate his love, to all his true and faithful servants without measure or reserve. Amen.

PASSION SUNDAY.

AMONGST the many calumnies the Jews and Pharisees were accustomed to throw upon our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, never did any one of them dare to charge him with any transgression of the law. They often reproached him with being possessed of a devil, or casting out evil spirits in Beelzebub, or in virtue of power derived from the prince of devils. They even called him a Samaritan, as appears from the Gospel of this day, which was a very great injury amongst the Jews; as the Samaritans, or inhabitants of Samaria, were professedly schismatics, inasmuch as they had separated themselves from the rest of the Jews, set up a false worship of their own in Samaria, and refused going to Jerusalem to join in the temple in the true worship of God, in which alone it was lawful to pay him any public worship or adoration. But we do not read that they ever accused our Saviour of any sinful or immoral action. Nay, in the Gospel of this day, he challenges

them to declare if ever he was guilty of a crime. This, indeed, could not be said of any other but the Son of God, as he alone was incapable of sin by nature ; and as mankind, in general, are sinners, born in sin, and liable to sin, as long as they live.

First—They are born in sin : for St. Paul declares, we are all born “ children of wrath ;” sinners of course, since nothing but sin could draw the displeasure of the Almighty upon us, at an age in which we are entirely incapable of doing a good or an evil action. This is, Christians, what divines call original sin, that sin or transgression of the first universal parent of mankind, which has been, by a most dreadful judgment of the Lord, entailed upon all his unhappy posterity to the end of time. For, after our first parents had transgressed the command the Almighty had given them, not to eat of the forbidden fruit in the garden of Paradise, they were immediately punished for their transgression, not only in themselves, but in their descendants for ever ; as all those that were to descend from them, were, in some measure, comprised in the transgressors themselves. But what did the punishment consist in, so far as it related to our first parents personally ? It consisted in stripping them of all the great privileges and qualifications they had been endowed and vested with in their creation. For it cannot be doubted, that the first parents of mankind came from the hands of God adorned with such virtues and perfections as became creatures formed to the likeness and image of the Divinity. And this is the reason, the Holy Ghost assures us, that “ God had made man upright ;” that is, blessed with uprightness ; and the royal prophet declares, that in his primitive state, man was scarcely inferior to the angels themselves. “ Thou hast made him little less than the angels,” Ps. 8. But as soon as they transgressed the divine command, they were degraded, to the lowest degree, both in soul and body. Then they forfeited the innocence, integrity, and uprightness in which they were created, and became liable to eternal damnation, which would infallibly have ensued, if the Almighty, in his infinite mercy, had not even then vouchsafed to promise them a Redeemer, by whose merits they might be saved. Then likewise they forfeited the great privilege of immortality they had been vested with in their creation, and which they would have enjoyed for ever, were it not for their disobedience. Then, in fine, they were banished the delicious garden of Paradise, made subject to death, and all the miseries incident to human life.

So far the punishment related to our first parents them-

selves. But what does it consist in, with respect to their posterity? In this, that in consequence of their disobedience, we are all born in sin and concupiscence, subject to death, and all the calamities we labour under in this world. For St. Paul declares, that "death is the wages of sin," and that it is "by sin death entered into the world." Had our first parents continued faithful to their Maker, as they were in reason, justice, and gratitude bound to do, the great and inestimable favours they had received in their creation, would have been transmitted to their posterity. In this supposition, we neither should have darkness in our understanding, weakness nor corruption in our will; but, on the contrary, a clear distinct knowledge of what is right and good, with the greatest vigour and facility to do and prosecute the same. Then we should be entire strangers to the law which reigns within us, and is continually warring with the law of reason, as St. Paul declares; that is, the law of concupiscence, or those violent passions which are born with us, and are continually hurrying us on to the perpetration of evil, with such violence and impetuosity as scarcely admit of any check or control. Then we should be liable neither to death, nor sickness, nor infirmities, nor sufferings of any kind. But because they sinned by transgressing the divine command, they forfeited the great blessings they received in their creation for themselves and their posterity for ever. Because they sinned we are all born in sin—because they sinned we are all come into the world full of darkness, weakness, misery and corruption.

It must be admitted, Christians, that this original sin, which is common to all mankind, is washed away by baptism, in which we are made children of God, members of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of heaven. But although the sin be forgiven and effaced by baptism, the penalties remain, for this weighty and material reason—that we always continue to be the descendants of a guilty parent, who had incurred the disgrace of God, and consequently must always continue subject to the consequences of his disgrace, even after being regenerated to new life by baptism, in Christ our Lord.

Can anything, Christians, give us a clearer notion of the heinousness of sin in general, than the dreadful havoc the first sin of man has made, and will ever make, in every succeeding generation, to the end of time? To this one sin are owing the temporal miseries of this life, and the eternal torments of the next. And how atrocious must that action have appeared in the sight of God, which deserved to be punished with the continual misery, the entire and eternal ruin of the greater part

of mankind? From this consideration, let us learn to look upon sin, in general, with the utmost abhorrence, as it is the only thing he punishes with the most inflexible severity—the only thing he holds in the utmost abhorrence, and the only thing that has already made mankind extremely unhappy in this world, and can make each of us, in particular, eternally unhappy in the world to come.

Second—We are not only born in sin, but likewise subject to sin as long as we live. For St. John declares, “we all offend in many things; and he that says he offendeth not, is a liar.” However, from these words of the apostle, we are not to understand that we are under an absolute necessity of doing unrighteous things. No; it is a point of faith, an undoubted principle of our holy religion, that we can always, with the grace of God, fulfil every material point of the law, and consequently, avoid every material transgression. What the apostle means is, that from the frailty of human nature, the many dangers and temptations that assail us daily on every side, we frequently become guilty of many slight or slender offences. From this the most righteous themselves are not exempt, inasmuch as the Holy Ghost assures us, that “the just man falls many times.” But is the misfortune confined to this, with regard to the bulk of mankind? No, quite the reverse; for how many are there even amongst ourselves that often, too often, offend, I do not say in some slender and insignificant matters, but even in the essential obligations of religion? How many are there who make so little account of the most grievous sins, that they seem to “swallow iniquity like water,” as the prophet expresses it? It is only a flying thought, they say, a single word, a moment’s pleasure or amusement. Granted; but it is a thought—a word—a moment’s gratification that offends the Divine Majesty; and that the Almighty God prohibits under the severest penalties, under pain of eternal damnation. On this principle, the holy fathers and doctors of the Church assure us, it is never lawful to commit the least venial sin or transgression, though it were in our power thereby to save all mankind, and rescue the reprovèd from the torments they endure, and must ever endure, in the devouring flames of hell, as that could not be compassed but by offending the Almighty God. On the same principle, they teach us that sin is the greatest evil in this world, because it is attended with eternal perdition of both soul and body. On the same principle, in fine, they maintain that sin, properly speaking, is the only evil in this world; as all other evils may be productive of good, by weaning us from the love of the

world, and affording frequent opportunities of suffering with humble patience and holy resignation, which must greatly increase our merits in the eyes of the Lord, and consequently the rewards that are reserved for us in the life to come.

Seeing, therefore, Christians, that sin is in its own nature highly offensive to God, and extremely hurtful and detrimental to man, is it not justly styled, by the holy fathers and doctors of the Church, the greatest evil, nay, the only evil that can befall us? If so, in what light should it be considered by any one who squares, or means to square, his actions by the principles of religion? Were we governed by the Spirit of God, we would readily forego the dearest advantages of this world, and even sacrifice our lives, rather than offend Almighty God, by transgressing his holy laws. For our Saviour says in the Gospel, "If any one love his father and mother, brothers or sisters, his lands or his possessions, even his very life more than me, he is not worthy to be called my disciple." But who is it that properly reflects upon these great principles of religion? Have we not been ourselves as deficient as any other in this respect? If we look back into our past lives, shall we be able to find or point out one single day free from sin; inasmuch as we may justly say with the prophet, "Our iniquities, O Lord, exceed in number the very hairs of our heads." And what must be the end of these our continual transgressions of the divine law? Hitherto, the Almighty has been pleased, in his infinite goodness, to spare and give us time to repent. Let us no longer abuse his mercies, lest he, being provoked, at length put a stop to our iniquities, by wreaking all his vengeance on our guilty heads. Let us rather return speedily unto the Lord, by forsaking our wicked ways, bewailing our former sins and transgressions in the bitterness of our hearts, and putting on a firm and unshaken resolution never to commit one mortal sin for any consideration whatsoever. This is the first step towards a reconciliation with Almighty God; by this first step once made, we shall soon be able, with the assistance of the Almighty, to rise gradually higher and higher to the practice of the great and sublime virtues our holy religion prescribes, which when practised and fulfilled, will infallibly entitle us one day to the joys and glory of the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

PALM SUNDAY.

THIS day the Church celebrates the triumphal entry of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, into Jerusalem, after displaying,

for three years throughout all Judea, the power and goodness of his Godhead, in the most surprising miracles. No sooner did he appear before that city, which in a few days was to conspire his ruin, and subject him to an ignominious death, than the people assembled in crowds about him. To pay him honour and homage, some strip themselves of their garments, others tear away the boughs from the trees, and spread them along the streets that lead to the temple, whilst the rest pierce the air with the liveliest acclamations of joy—"Hosanna to the Son of David ; blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord ; Hosanna in the highest !" O Christians, how sublime and instructive is a scene of this nature ! The Son of God appears, not in the vain trappings of human grandeur, but in the meekness of a lamb ; he is seated on an ass, and shouts of joy burst forth from the hearts and lips of all that behold him.

On the approach of those happy days, when the same Christ, the same God that entered Jerusalem, is about to enter into your hearts at Easter, such should be your joys, your exultations. If, on the one hand, I charge you to avoid the crimes of the Jews in crucifying their Saviour, so would I recommend, to your imitation, their zeal and fervour, in stripping themselves of their garments ; I mean your sins and worldly attachments, and sincerely exult at the news I announce to you, that you are to visit Christ Jesus in a few days in the most holy sacrament of the altar. Your desires, therefore, should be vehement, and your preparations proportioned to those desires ; because the greatest blessings flow from a holy communion. We will consider what dispositions are requisite to obtain those blessings.

What greater honour or advantage can any one pretend to than to receive Christ Jesus within his breast ; as in Christ Jesus are centered the most valuable blessings, and these he abundantly imparts in proportion to the extent and capacity of the soul he thus visits ? It is an article of our faith, the strongest and most beautiful pillar of our holy religion, that in the Eucharist we receive our blessed Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, his body, his blood, his soul, his divinity. This is grounded on the words of our Saviour, in the institution of this holy sacrament, the night before he suffered, saying—"This is my body ; this is my blood." Some there are who would have these words to imply no more than the figure of his body and blood. But upon what grounds ? The very following words plainly show they are to be understood in the natural sense alone ; for our Saviour in saying, "This is my

body," adds, "which shall be given for you; this is my blood which shall be shed for you." Now if these words were to be understood in a figurative sense, it would follow, that it was only the figure of the body of Christ that suffered for us, and the figure of his blood that was shed for us: a construction that would reduce us all into our primeval state of corruption, under the dominion of original sin, and liable to eternal damnation; as nothing less than the real sufferings of Christ Jesus could have released us from sin, and reconciled us to his Father, which real sufferings must have been wanting, had Christ Jesus suffered only in figure. "The bread that I will give you," says Christ, in the sixth chapter of St. John, "is my flesh, for the life of the world." The Jews were offended at these words, because their understandings were darkened in consequence of their sins; yet instead of undeceiving them, which he could easily have done, and would certainly have done, if the words were not to be understood in the plain, natural sense, he confirms what he had said by a most solemn oath, "Verily, I say unto you," observe what he says, "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye shall not have life in you." In the plain, natural sense, were those words understood by all the doctors and fathers, from the earliest establishment of the Church; and these surely were good judges of the meaning of Scripture, some of whom were instructed by the apostles, and their immediate successors. Those fathers and doctors of antiquity are continually telling us, that in the Eucharist we receive the body and blood of Christ, not in figure, but in reality and substance, the very same body that was born of the Virgin Mary, and died on the cross for our redemption. The Greek and Latin Churches have always adored Christ Jesus in the most holy Eucharist, nor can it be imagined that all the faithful spread over the earth would have paid Christ Jesus such homage in the sacrament, were they not convinced by their pastors, from age to age, that Christ Jesus was really and substantially present in the sacrament.

To those clear and convincing proofs drawn from the words of Scripture, the belief of all antiquity, and the adoration constantly paid to Jesus Christ in the sacrament, by the universal Church of God, what objection can be made? not one of weight or moment. The first objection is, that our Saviour said, "Do this in memory of me." He said so; but this was a precept of love to his disciples, to offer up to his Heavenly Father unto the end of the world, according to the prophecy of Malachy, the same sacrifice, under the appearance of brea¹

and wine, which he then was preparing to offer in the tragical and bloody scene of his passion and death : and the Church, ever faithful to his commands, has continued from those days, and will continue to do so to the end of the world. The second objection is taken from the sixth chapter of St. John, where our Saviour says, "The flesh availeth nothing : the words which I speak are spirit and life." But in what sense does our Saviour say these words ? To correct the erroneous ideas of the Capharnaïtes, who imagined they were to eat the flesh of the Son of man, in a gross and material manner ; like the flesh, as St. Austin has it, that was sold publicly in the markets. In this sense, indeed, "the flesh availeth nothing," because it is then considered as separated from the vivifying Spirit of God ; but the flesh, united to this divine Spirit, taken and received in a spiritual, real and substantial manner in the sacrament, availeth much, as the same holy father observes ; otherwise the Word or the Son of God would have never become flesh for the salvation of mankind. But how is it possible that what appears to all our senses (a third objection) to be bread, should not be really so ?—By the omnipotent power of God. He that changed water into wine in Cana, that gave power to Moses to change the water of the Nile into blood, who created all things out of nothing ; can it be denied, I say, that this Almighty, All-powerful God, can transform bread into his flesh, and wine into his blood ? Now, the question is, has he done so ? The Gospel assures us he has. All antiquity has constantly believed it ; the Catholic writers assert it unanimously ; the Church has always declared it in her decisions : and shall you put in competition with this demonstrative evidence, the testimony of our senses ? How often have not your senses deceived you, in mistaking one thing for another ? Enlightened by a noonday sun, have you not mistaken one man for another in passing the streets ? And shall these fallacious senses stand before the word of God ? "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of God remaineth for ever." The people that followed St. John on the banks of the Jordan beheld, at the baptism of Christ, the Holy Ghost descend in the form of a dove—thus we behold in the sacrament the form of bread ; but still we are not to credit our senses in this, any more than the Jews were, in that ; but submit them by humble faith to the dominion of God's holy word. Why ? Because Christ has said, "This is my body ; this is my blood."

Almighty God, in granting us his only Son, has granted everything great and good ; and the most valuable blessings

necessarily flow from a worthy communion. The power and the mercies of God, I know, are not confined to time or place ; but it is a truth, that in the Holy Eucharist he gives liveliest expressions of his love for mankind. He treats us as he did Zacheus : he comes into our house, and brings along with him peace and salvation. On entering, he silently tells us, "He that eateth of my flesh, and drinketh of my blood, remaineth in me, and I in him." From such a union what happiness must flow ! All divines agree, that in this sacrament Almighty God pours into the heart of man such abundant graces as would necessarily raise and certainly fix him in a state of sanctity and righteousness, did it not meet with insurmountable obstacles on his side. It is the peculiar effect of this sacrament to nourish the soul, and impart all the strength and vigour it can admit of. Our Saviour having declared : "My flesh is truly meat," it follows it must have the same effect on the soul, that material nourishment has on the body ; namely, keeping it alive, and preserving it in full vigour and strength. Observe the effects of this divine food daily before your eyes. You observe lions changed into lambs, hard and flinty rocks into sons of Abraham—that is, inveterate sinners into good and righteous men ; passions subdued, inveterate habits removed, the cold Christian made fervent and zealous.

These blessings should animate us with the most ardent desires ; and yet we behold the most lamentable langour, and a general want of these dispositions, which I shall now briefly touch upon.

I do not at present mean to speak of those sublime dispositions of the soul, which relate merely to pure devotion or perfection ; nor of those long and deep reflections on our own unworthiness, that fervency of spirit, those eager desires of being united to Christ Jesus in his sacrament, that generosity which influences our offering unto God, the day we receive, some little sacrifices by prayer, retirement, self-denial, or alms ; because all pious souls are generally mindful of those points, and with great reason, because, according to the opinion of divines, although the sacrament necessarily confers a certain portion of grace on all those that receive it worthily, yet there are many valuable and additional favours which are never granted but to such as receive it with particular piety and fervour. What I chiefly rest upon now is, that disposition which is absolutely necessary for receiving the sacrament worthily, and which consists in a certain purity of soul, or in being free and exempt from all mortal sin. For this sacrament being, as divines call it, a sacrament of the living, that is, a

sacrament which was not intended for giving or conferring, but for the increase and perfection of spiritual life, it follows, we ought not to receive it before we have received the grace of God. This obligation appears clear from the dignity of the sacrament, wherein is contained Christ Jesus, our Lord, the Redeemer of mankind, the God of all purity, justice, and holiness. Whoever, therefore, proposes, and I hope you all propose, to receive your Lord and your God in this sacrament, in the holy season we are now entering upon, must first take care to cleanse and purify his soul from all mortal sin, in the tribunal of penance—otherwise he unworthily and sacrilegiously receives the sacrament of the Lord, and is guilty of the highest abomination, according to St. Paul, speaking of this holy sacrament: “he that eateth and drinketh unworthily thereof, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” Justly it should be so, for what greater indignity could be offered unto a God, than to introduce him into a heart polluted with sin? Or, as the same apostle argues, in his Epistle to the Hebrews—“If those who had transgressed the law of Moses were to die without mercy, how much more severely must they expect to be punished, who trample under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified a profane thing.” If, therefore, there be any amongst you who refuses to renounce his evil ways, and repent sincerely of all his sins, let him keep off—let him fly from the table of the Lord; for to partake of the celestial food which Christ Jesus hath prepared for us in the sacrament without the nuptial robe of innocence, were crowning all his iniquities and confirming for ever his own damnation. “What communication can there be betwixt light and darkness, purity and uncleanness, godliness and iniquity?” None. “You cannot expect,” they are the words of St. Paul, “you cannot expect to drink the chalice of the Lord, and the cup of devils; you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils.”

You must not, however, imagine, that because you are sinners you should lay aside all thoughts of receiving the sacrament of the Lord. I only say you are not to receive it in a state of sin, because that were a most horrid sacrilege, as I already observed; but you are to forsake your sins, and by sincere repentance, endeavour to qualify yourselves as much as human frailty can admit of, to draw near unto, and sit down at the table of the Lord. Be pleased to observe there is here a double precept, the one of receiving the communion, the other of receiving it worthily and with due preparation; the first is

implied in these words of Christ, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you." The second is laid down by St. Paul, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians (xi, 28)—"Let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice." This "proving" consists in purging the soul of its crimes by penance, which is the first and most essential step towards a holy communion—a holy communion opens the treasures of God's grace and special favours in this life—and God's grace here is a certain pledge of eternal happiness hereafter. Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY—RESURRECTION.

CHRIST JESUS, "man of sorrows," and "Lamb," whom we beheld a few days ago, led to slaughter by his people, is this day risen triumphant and glorious. Clothed with immortality, the illustrious King of Israel, the Pride of the house of Juda, arises from the grave, after conquering death, and humbling all the powers of hell. There is not any one festival in the year which the Church of God commemorates with greater joy, or celebrates with greater solemnity; than the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; because it is the greatest mystery of our holy religion, and forms the grounds of our faith; in the primitive church, eight entire days were employed in solemnizing this festival, with the greatest marks of devotion and religion. In process of time, the solemnity has been confined to the holy days of Easter. This festival has been called by the holy fathers the particular day of the Lord—the festival of festivals, and the solemnity of solemnities. And with a great deal of reason, since it is on this solemn day that Christ Jesus, by resuming the life he had laid down on the cross for the redemption of mankind, triumphed over all his enemies, subdued the empire of death, vanquished the powers of hell, and opened the gates of heaven, to himself as man, and likewise to all those who faithfully observe and fulfil his holy laws. For be pleased to observe, that the glory which the humanity of Christ enjoys in heaven, was due to his merits upon earth. "It was necessary Christ should suffer," St. Paul says, "and by that means enter the glory of God." Besides, as heaven was the purchase of the death of Christ, he could transfer it to whom he pleased; and this he has done by promising it to all those that fulfil his holy laws. The resurrection of our Lord is therefore the full accomplishment of religion, or the redemption of mankind. By the death of

Christ, mankind have been released from sin, and reconciled to the Almighty God; but by the resurrection, Christ opens the way to the realms of light, which he purchased for us upon the cross.

When the Almighty God, Christians, had resolved, in his infinite wisdom, to deliver the Jews from their captivity in Egypt, he ordered that a lamb should be offered up in sacrifice in every family, and the doorposts and lintels of every house sprinkled with the blood of the lamb. In the night, he sent forth his angel, who destroyed and put to death the first-born amongst the Egyptians, but spared and passed by the families whose doorposts were sprinkled with the blood of the lamb. Soon after this first miraculous delivery from death, followed the entire delivery of the Jews from the slavery of Egypt, under the conduct and ministry of Moses.

In memory of this passage of the destroying angel, and the departure of the Jews from Egypt, which was subsequent thereto, the great and solemn festival of the pasch, or pass-over, was instituted, as appears from the very word, which, in the Hebrew language, signifies departure. But this pasch, or passover of the Jews, was only a type or figure of the great pasch of the Christians; for St. Paul says, "Christ Jesus, who is our pasch, or paschal lamb, has been sacrificed." And St. John, in the Gospel—"Christ Jesus is the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." As the Jews were delivered from their slavery in Egypt, at the time of the institution of their pasch, so was mankind delivered from the slavery of sin, at the time of the Christian pasch, or the death and immolation of Christ upon the cross, according to St. Paul, who declares that it was upon the cross that Christ Jesus blotted out and effaced, with his blood, the sentence of condemnation which had been signed and pronounced by the Almighty God in heaven, against the whole race of mankind after the fall and prevarication of our first parents in Paradise.

This was enough, Christians, for the redemption of mankind, but it was not enough for the glory of Christ, and the manifestation of his Divinity. For as he had frequently declared during his mortal life, that he was the Son of God, and God himself—and in proof thereof, alleged that he would rise the third day from the dead, it was necessary he should arise, as he had foretold; otherwise his promises would have remained unfulfilled, which must have shown him not to be what he had declared himself, the Son of God, and the Redeemer of the world. This is the reason why St. Paul says, that "if Christ had not risen from the dead, our religion is vain and ground-

less ;” for if Christ Jesus had not risen from the dead as he had promised, he must have been guilty of a falsehood and notorious imposition, which is entirely inconsistent with the truth and sanctity of a God ; and consequently the whole system of religion, which he had established on earth, must necessarily fall of itself to the ground. But if Christ be risen from the dead, he must be then the Son of God ; for it was necessary for the glory of Christ, and the manifestation of his Divinity he should rise the third day : and this is in reality what he has done ; for although his body had been put into a sepulchre, or subterraneous vault, and a huge stone rolled to the entrance thereof—although a strong guard had been stationed around the sepulchre to guard it, and prevent the body from being taken away ; yet early in the morning, when Mary Magdalen and others went to the sepulchre, they found the stone rolled away, and entering the monument, beheld an angel, in the shape of a young man, clothed in white, who said unto them, “Be not affrighted. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen ; he is not here.”

The same day that Christ Jesus appeared in his new life unto Mary Magdalen, he also appeared unto two of his disciples, and afterwards to his apostles assembled, so that his resurrection could no longer be doubted ; and it was known and attested by numbers of undeniable witnesses. Let us then adore Christ Jesus in his resurrection, and rejoice in spirit to see our God and Redeemer in possession of the glory that was due to his sufferings and merits, and by his impassibility and immortality, for ever screened from all the attempts of his enemies, the malice of the Jews, or the fury of hell. Christ Jesus is now impassible—that is, no longer liable to sufferings, or pain, or death ; “Christ died once, but is no more to die. Death is no more to have any power or dominion over him.”

Christ Jesus arose from the dead, not for his own glory alone or the manifestation of his Divinity, but for our instruction and improvement, to show what we are to do in order to partake of his glorious resurrection, or the eternal happiness he has promised us both in soul and body. “Christ was delivered for our sins,” says St. Paul, “and rose again for our justification ;” not that the resurrection of Christ is the efficient cause of our justification, because we are justified or reconciled to the Almighty God by the death of Christ upon the cross ; but because the resurrection of Christ is the model we should propose unto ourselves, in order to attain to that justice and righteousness which are requisite for the enjoyment of the eternal happiness that hath been purchased for us upon

the cross. This is what St. Paul sets forth, when he says, "Since Christ is risen from the dead, so should we also walk in the newness of life;" that is, since Christ is risen from death to life, so should we also arise from the death of sin to the life of grace. This is what the fathers and doctors of the Church call a spiritual resurrection, or arising in spirit to God, which is the fruit we shall all reap from the mystery of this day.

But what does this spiritual resurrection consist in? It consists in "purging out the old leaven of sin," as St. Paul says in his Epistle to the Colossians, in which the apostle alludes to the precept of the law, which forbids the Jews to keep any leaven in their houses during the pasch, and to leading a new life in God. If you are risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, and not the things that are upon earth." Now this spiritual resurrection should have three essential characters, which are all discernible in the resurrection of Christ, namely, it should be true, manifest, and lasting. 1st—It should be true; that is, as members of Christ arisen from the dead, we should arise from our sinful ways, and return unto the Lord, not in appearance only, but in truth and reality. 2nd—It should be manifest; that is, it should appear by our actions and conduct that we have forsaken all our former sinful ways, and are transformed into new men: for Christ was not content in arising from the dead, but was also pleased to show and manifest the resurrection upon every occasion. 3rd—It should be lasting; that is, after arising in spirit, and returning sincerely to God, we should never more abandon his holy service: for Christ Jesus, after arising from the dead, is no more to die, but enjoy for ever the new life he obtained. If we are risen in spirit in this manner, there is no doubt but we shall one day share in the resurrection of Christ Jesus, and partake, both in body and soul, of all the glory he is already in possession of in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

WE read in this day's Gospel, Christians, that our blessed Lord and Redeemer, Christ Jesus, sometime after his resurrection, appeared in the midst of his disciples, (who had met together and kept themselves shut up for fear of the Jews,) and said unto them, "Peace be unto you." This was the gift Christ Jesus was pleased to make unto his disciples, in his first apparition. He would not bestow upon them either power or

wealth, or the enjoyment of this world ; but his holy peace he gave them, saying even a second time, "Peace be unto you ;" which was, in reality, the greatest blessing they could receive. For what is the world to a man that is not in peace with God? Can he enjoy the least comfort or satisfaction upon earth? Is not his whole life one continued scene of uneasiness and misery? "Who is it that resists God," says Job, "and has any peace within him?" I know that sinners very often put on a face of tranquillity ; but could we draw the veil aside, and see into their hearts, there we should find a continual hell from the stings of their conscience, the disturbance and agitation of their passions, and the lively apprehensions they continually live under, of meeting the just punishments they deserve for their repeated sins and transgressions. The Holy Ghost declares by the Prophet Isaiah, that "impious and ungodly men have no peace;" and by the Prophet Jeremiah—"They may talk of peace, but they never have it in their hearts."

And indeed, Christians, how is it possible for any one to enjoy peace or tranquillity within him, who knows he is an enemy to Almighty God, and in consequence thereof exposed to fall every moment into the devouring flames of hell? Now, this is precisely the situation of every sinner, from whence it follows, they can have no true peace of mind, nor enjoyment of heart. There are some sinners, you may say, who seem pretty easy and undisturbed in their minds, in the very height of their iniquities. I confess such there may be. But to what is that owing? Nothing less than their having carried their iniquities to such a pitch, as to become insensible of the judgments of God. As in the common course of nature there is a certain lethargy, wherein the most painful incisions, or the very application of fire, may not be felt, so there is in the spiritual ways of heaven a certain hardness or insensibility, which people entertain little or no apprehensions about, or the terrible effects of divine justice to which such a situation constantly exposes them. But this is no real calm, or if it be, it is a calm of worse consequence than the most violent storm ; because it lulls us asleep in the very midst of dangers, and upon the very brink of destruction. If, therefore, you would avoid this misfortune, and obtain that peace which Christ Jesus bestowed upon his disciples, you must renounce your sinful ways, and return sincerely unto the Lord, by a true repentance, and a thorough reformation of life—for peace and tranquillity are the necessary attendants upon virtue and justice, as appears from these words of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, "Take

my yoke upon you, and you shall find rest unto your souls ; ” and St. Paul further assures us, “ that the kingdom of God is justice, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

In confirmation hereof, I shall only appeal to your own experience. What joy, what pleasure have you not felt within your own breasts, as often as you returned sincerely unto the Lord ! The strong and lively hopes you entertained of having received the pardon of all your sins, and of being reconciled to Almighty God, filled your souls with inexpressible delight. Had these moments continued, what happiness could be equal to yours ! But it is in your own power, Christians, to continue and persevere in this happy situation, by avoiding everything that may deprive you of the friendship and favour of Almighty God, and hinder him from pouring forth his consolations into your souls.

If you do this, “ the peace of God, which surpasses all conception,” as St. Paul says, “ will certainly dwell in your hearts and your minds.” For we read in the Gospel of this day, that when Christ Jesus appeared amongst his disciples, they were extremely glad. His presence dispelled in one single moment the grief they were in for his death, removed the apprehensions they were under, of his not being risen from the dead, and undoubtedly filled their souls with joy and delight. But be pleased to observe, that this blessing was the effect of the presence of Christ Jesus. Thomas, who was then absent, had no share in it. If, therefore, you mean to partake of the inward joy and tranquillity which proceed from the Spirit of God, Christ Jesus must be present unto your souls, by the influence and impression of his holy grace. The moment you give up or forfeit his holy grace, by transgressing his laws, you necessarily lose the presence of Christ, and consequently all the advantages that flow from it. In this situation you must be filled with doubts, anxiety, and apprehensions, as St. Thomas was before he enjoyed the presence of Christ Jesus.

The misfortune, however, of St. Thomas, arising from the absence of Christ Jesus, did not long continue ; for shortly after he vouchsafed to appear to his apostles, while Thomas was with them, which removed all his uneasiness, and made him partaker of the blessings and spiritual joys the other apostles had already enjoyed. This favour was the more to be valued, as Thomas had rendered himself extremely unworthy of it, by his obstinacy and incredulity. Although the other apostles had assured him that Christ had appeared unto them, in his new life, yet he would not give any credit thereunto, but declared, on the contrary, he never would believe it until he

saw him with his eyes, as the scripture says, and felt the very wounds he had received. When our Saviour appeared after that, he desired Thomas to draw near, and put his finger into the wounds, upon which Thomas cried out, "My Lord and my God." At the same time our Saviour thought proper to make him a public reproach for his obstinacy and incredulity, saying, "Because thou hast seen, Thomas, thou hast believed; happy are those that believe and do not see: be not incredulous, but faithful."

Here it may be asked, if St. Thomas had any merit in acknowledging Christ Jesus risen from the dead, after seeing him with his eyes, and touching him with his hands, "since faith," according to St. Paul, "is the belief of those things that are invisible." In answer to this question, the holy fathers say, that St. Thomas did merit in reality by the confession he made of Christ Jesus. For although he saw him in the flesh, yet it was not his humility alone that he acknowledged, but his divinity also, in proclaiming Christ not only his Lord, but his God. It is however plain, that St. Thomas had not that humble and simple faith Christ recommends, saying, "Happy are those that believe and see not." This is the faith that should animate us all at this period. Let us therefore believe and confess that Christ Jesus is truly risen from the dead, and in possession of immortal life. Let us likewise apply ourselves to lead a new life with Christ Jesus risen from the dead, by dying to sin, and living to God alone. If we do, we shall be one day partakers of the resurrection of Christ, and of the eternal peace he has promised his disciples in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE whole scope of the Gospel this day, is no other than to show that Christ Jesus was truly the Redeemer of mankind, inasmuch as he laid down his life for their salvation; "I am the good shepherd," our Saviour says, "and the good shepherd giveth his life for his flock;" whereas all others only consult their own interests, and are very far from sacrificing themselves for the good and benefit of their flock. By these words, our Saviour meant a silent reproach to the Pharisees, who looked upon themselves as the head directors and pastors of the people; but were by no means deserving of that title, inasmuch as they had not the dispositions that were requisite for that purpose—a willingness and readiness to lay down their very lives for the

good of the flock. But Christ Jesus had these dispositions in reality, as appears from his conduct and actions, in laying down his life for the good of mankind; it follows plainly that he was the good shepherd or pastor, and should have been acknowledged as such. The hireling, or mercenary pastor, our Saviour says, is always careless, always negligent, always heedless of the necessities of the flock. The moment he sees danger approaching, he abandons the flock, and flies for his own safety, and by flying in the time of danger, gives up his flock a prey to the voracious enemy—"But I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep;" that is, I examine them carefully, watch over them constantly, provide them with everything that is necessary, and guard them against any danger they may be threatened with, even at the expense of my own life.

"I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep, and my sheep know me." Here is a certain rule for distinguishing all those that are truly of the flock of Christ; viz., acknowledging their pastor, and obeying his voice, for "my sheep know me," Christ says, "and obey my voice." If therefore any one should refuse acknowledging their lawful pastors, or obeying their voice, it is plain they cannot be deemed a part of the flock of Christ. For as all lawful pastors are established by Christ Jesus, for feeding his flock, that is, instructing, directing, and governing the faithful in matters relating to salvation, to resist them, or not to obey their directions, is manifestly resisting or not obeying the instructions of Christ. Christ Jesus might indeed, if he had thought proper, have made all the faithful equal in power and authority; and have directed them by the immediate influence of his Holy Spirit in the ways of heaven, to the end of time. But he has been pleased to dispose and ordain things in a different manner: "for some he has appointed apostles," as St. Paul says, "and some prophets; others he has made doctors, and others pastors." Seeing therefore that Christ Jesus has been pleased to appoint pastors in his Church, or men whose business it is to instruct, direct, govern—in a word, to feed his flock, it follows that those pastors should be acknowledged and obeyed by all those that are subordinate to their care and direction. This subordination and submission of the flock to their lawful pastors is so essential an obligation, as to hold good, even when the pastors themselves may be reproachable in their conduct; according to that observation of our blessed Saviour, "The Scribes and Pharisees have sat in the chair of Moses; do ye therefore as they say, and not as they do;" the reason is, because the immorality of any man, neither can, nor should

prejudice the institutions of Christ. Although a pastor were reproachable, he is indeed accountable to God, and also to his superiors ; but accountable as he is, he is yet the minister of Christ, and the pastor of a certain portion of the flock. In this character they have a right to be acknowledged and obeyed, when they prescribe nothing but what is conformable to the laws of God ; for our Saviour, in talking of the pastors of the Church, says, "He that despiseth you, despiseth me." Yet should any pastor, or any superior, command anything unlawful, we are not obliged to obey ; but, on the contrary, to resist and disobey ; for "all power," the apostle says, "is granted for edification, and not for destruction."

But whom are we to understand, Christians, by the name of pastor ? 1st—We are chiefly and principally to understand the head of the Church, who is the supreme and universal head, or pastor of the flock of Christ, as appears from these words of Christ Jesus in the Gospel, "Peter, feed my lambs," in general ; and again, "Feed my sheep," meaning the pastors themselves. 2nd—We are to understand by the pastors of the flock of Christ, in a particular manner, the bishops ; because they have been particularly instituted to govern and feed the flock of Christ ; as appears from these words of St. Paul, "Take heed unto yourselves and the universal flock over which the Holy Ghost has placed you bishops, to govern the Church of God." In the beginning of the Church, there were no other pastors than bishops. When the faithful began greatly to increase and multiply, then the care and superintendence of part of the flock of Christ were committed to priests. It was likewise to the bishops alone, as successors of the apostles, that Christ Jesus promised infallibility ; saying, "I will send you the Comforter, who will teach you all truth ;" and again, "Lo ! I am with you until the end of the world." This is the reason why bishops alone have a right to pronounce upon points of doctrine, in councils that are held for ascertaining or clearing up any point of faith. Doctors and divines are employed in discussing and preparing the points that are laid before the council ; but the bishops alone, as the infallible judges of the doctrine of Christ, have a right to decide.

We are not, however, to imagine that every pastor or bishop is an infallible judge of the doctrine of Christ. No ; this infallibility in sound doctrine, which is the greater part of the pastoral care, is lodged in the body, or majority of the pastors or bishops, teaching and directing the flock, jointly with and under the direction of the head of the Church ; that

is, we are to understand that Christ Jesus, who has promised to his Church the continual assistance and direction of his Holy Spirit, will never permit the greater number of the pastors or bishops to teach unto the flock any other than the true doctrine of Christ. One pastor or bishop, nay, many pastors or bishops may go astray, and run into error, as hath been frequently the case ; but then the rest of the pastors never fail to rise up against the spreading error, and indicate by their writings the true doctrine of Christ. 3rd—By the name of pastors, we are to understand the priests, to whom the government of a part of the flock is committed by the bishops. All others are no more than auxiliaries. They may, from a spirit of zeal, or Christian charity, labour in the vineyard of the Lord, and, like the pastors, they are accountable in conscience for the flock.

“I have other sheep,” our Saviour says in the Gospel of this day, “that are not of this fold ; them also I must bring in, and they will hear my voice ; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.” By these words our Saviour points out the vocation or conversion of the Gentiles, who had been brought into the fold or Church of Christ, by a pure effect of the mercy of God. They were not originally in this fold, because they were not the chosen people of God—this chosen people were the Jews, as being the posterity of Abraham, to whom the promises were made. But they have been brought into the fold, by being converted to the faith of Christ ; so that there is now no more than one fold, and one pastor ; that is, one Church, which contains all those that believe in Christ—the Greek and the Barbarian ; the Jew and the Gentile. In like manner, one pastor—that is, Christ Jesus, who is the head and invisible pastor of all those that believe in him. How thankful should we be to the Almighty God, for having brought us into the fold of Christ ! We were all out of the fold, as being descended from the Gentiles, to whom the promises were not made. Yet the Almighty God has brought us into the fold, in his infinite mercy, in preference to thousands of others, who still remain in the darkness of infidelity and error. Let us then make the proper use of this singular blessing, by remaining all our lives within the fold, and obeying constantly the voice of our heavenly pastor ; that is, complying faithfully with the doctrine of Christ. If we do, we shall not only partake of his choicest blessings upon earth, but likewise share eternally in the glory and happiness of his heavenly kingdom. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

AFTER our blessed Lord and Redeemer, Christ Jesus, had risen from the dead, he remained forty days upon earth, conversing with his apostles, the Scripture says, and informing them of all things relating to the kingdom of God ; that is, the establishment and government of his Church upon earth. During this period he took frequent opportunities of comforting his disciples, and preparing their minds for his departure from them, and the uneasiness they must necessarily feel, from want of his divine presence, as he was shortly afterwards to ascend into heaven, and take possession of his kingdom in the bosom of his Father. With this view, Christ says to his disciples, "A little while and you shall not see me:" meaning, my stay with you is to be but short. In a few days I shall quit you,ⁿ and ascend unto my Father, from whom I came. But then do not imagine that I mean to abandon you: no; "again, a little while, and you shall see me." After the short course of your mortal life is over, you shall see me in my kingdom, where you shall reign with me for ever and ever. In the meantime, during your passage here below, "you shall lament and weep; but the world shall rejoice."

Can anything be more surprising, Christians, than this conduct of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, towards his own disciples, whom he had promised to bless for ever, with his own presence, in the kingdom of heaven? They were his own disciples; that is, his favourites and friends, whom he had chosen out of the world, to put into possession of the kingdom of heaven; and yet he assures them, that during their conversation upon earth, they are to weep and lament. "The world," he says, "shall rejoice; but you shall be sorrowful." From these words, the holy fathers say, it plainly follows, that nothing can be more inconsistent with eternal happiness than the happiness of this world. For if it were not so, surely the Almighty God would not have failed to bestow a great share of this happiness upon his own disciples. It was in his power, master as he was, and Lord of the whole creation, to bestow on his friends riches, power, and pleasure. Yet he not only refused doing so, but declared unto them, as his disciples, "ye shall weep and lament." Surely what the eternal wisdom of God was pleased to choose for his own favourites, must be what is most valuable in the eyes of God, and should likewise be most valuable in the eyes of every Christian. The misfortune, however, is, that people generally fix their hearts in the happiness of this world, without ever thinking, or thinking as

they ought, of the happiness of the world to come : the consequence of which must be, to rejoice in this world, as our Saviour says, and afterwards to be condemned to eternal misery and pain. For eternal happiness will be granted, as is promised, to those alone that love and serve God faithfully in this life. Now nothing can be more destructive of the love of God than the love of the world, for St. John says, "If any one love this world, the love of God the Father is not in him;" as the love of God necessarily implies and requires that the Almighty rule over all our affections and desires, that we be always united unto him, and ready upon every occasion to sacrifice every interest and advantage to the observation of his holy laws ; which can never be the case where the love of this world prevails in our hearts. On the contrary, where the love of this world prevails, people are always ready to transgress the most material points of the law, for the interests of this world. And this is the reason why Christ Jesus has laid this world under the heaviest curses and maledictions, saying, "Woe be unto the world." Not the material world—the heavens, the earth, the seas, or any other part of the creation, but the moral, rather the immoral world ; or in other words, all those that fix their hearts upon this world, or the riches, honours, and pleasures of it, to the prejudice of that supreme love they necessarily owe unto the Almighty God.

What, then, is the very first thing a Christian should do, in order to attain to eternal happiness? He should disengage, and is bound in conscience, under pain of eternal damnation, to disengage his heart, and keep it disengaged from the love of this world. "Do not love this world," St. John says, "nor the things that are in this world." If you do, you cannot love the Almighty God ; and if you do not love the Almighty God, it is plain you constantly transgress the first and greatest precept of the law—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength ;" and if you constantly transgress the first and greatest precept of the law, it is likewise plain you can have no pretension to heaven ; but, on the contrary, must be for ever a victim to the devouring flames of hell !

Moreover, what should induce us more powerfully to disengage our hearts from this world, is, that it was never intended as a place of happiness for man. No. In the principles of religion it is rather a place of exile—a vale of tears—a place of trial and sufferings—a passage to immortal life. It is, as it were, the stage, whereon every man is to act that part assigned to him by the Almighty God, in the different

stations of life, and thereby entitle himself to the eternal rewards of the life to come. What then can be more unreasonable or more preposterous in any man, than to fix his heart on this world, and place his affection on things that can never make him happy, but, on the contrary, lead directly to everlasting misery and pain? Yet we daily see numbers of Christians that are as anxious for, and have as great a tie in this world, as if it were to last for ever, or that they could for ever enjoy the riches and pleasures thereof. But a few moments will undeceive them. Death will soon strip them of all they ever amassed, and make them sensible, when too late, of the error they were guilty of, in preferring the perishable wealth of this world to the everlasting treasures of heaven. Then will they comprehend, but with no advantage, the full meaning of these words of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, "What doth it avail a man to gain the whole world, and to lose his soul? Or what is it that can make the least amends or compensation for the loss of his soul?" Whoever loves this world, or suffers the love thereof to prevail in his heart, and overrule his affections, must necessarily lose his soul, "because it is impossible," our Saviour says, "to serve two masters, God and the world."

If therefore, Christians, you mean to prevent this great and irretrievable misfortune, that is, the loss of your own souls—you must disengage your hearts from the love of this world, and turn all your thoughts and affections upon the kingdom of heaven. By this step, it is certain you deprive yourselves of a great deal of the pleasures, of the comforts, and advantages of the world; but this privation will lead you infallibly to eternal joys and everlasting happiness. "Now, indeed, you have sorrows," our Saviour says to his disciples in the Gospel of this day, "but I will see you again, in the kingdom of heaven, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you." Is it not then vastly better to have sorrows in this life, with the disciples of Christ Jesus, for a very short time, and afterwards rejoice for ever with him in the kingdom of heaven, than rejoice for a very short time in this world, and be afterwards condemned for ever in the everlasting flames of hell to inexpressible misery and pain? Surely there is not the least room for doubt or hesitation in an alternative of this kind. But what is that sorrow which Providence has made the lot of all his true and faithful disciples? 1st—It is the sorrow, compunction, and repentance—that sorrow which was familiar to David: "I watered my couch with my tears;" to Ezechias—"Recogitabo," etc. 2nd—

It is the hardships that all good Christians must labour under during their sorrowful pilgrimage here below. Let us therefore embrace that party which is attended with sorrow in this life, but must, in the end, necessarily deliver us from eternal misery, and put us in possession of everlasting happiness in the realms of light. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

As the time was drawing near when our Saviour was to quit this material world, and ascend unto his Father, he frequently entertained his disciples with his design, and even frequently put it in their way to ask him questions relating thereto, of which we have a remarkable instance in the Gospel of this day, where our Saviour says—"I am going unto him that sent me; and none of you ask me whither do you go?" St. Peter and St. Thomas had already asked the question, as we read in the 13th and the 14th chapter of St. John; but our Saviour would have them still ask him many more questions upon that head, in order to inform them fully of everything concerning his departure from this world. But even now that they were encouraged thereto by our blessed Redeemer, they had not the courage to question him, so great was their grief and concern for being in a short time to be deprived of the presence of their Heavenly Master. This our Saviour was sensible of; for which reason he said unto them, "It is expedient [for you that I go; for if I did not go, the Paraclete or Spirit Comforter will not come unto you: but if I go, I will send him unto you." For in the decrees of the eternal wisdom of God, it had been resolved the Holy Ghost should not be sent, or descend upon the apostles, until after the ascension of Christ Jesus into heaven; therefore, it was necessary Christ Jesus should go unto his Father, in order to send the Paraclete, or the Spirit of God, unto his apostles. The promise Christ Jesus made his apostles of sending them the Holy Ghost, must undoubtedly have been a great consolation unto them in their affliction; as it was the liveliest expression of the inexpressible love Christ Jesus bore them, and an undoubted pledge of the eternal happiness he had so often promised.

This divine Spirit "when he shall come," our Saviour says, "shall convince the world of sin, of justice, and of judgment." Of sin, because the Jews were guilty of sin in not believing the divinity of Christ. What could be more criminal, more sinful in the Jews, than openly to resist

and shut their eyes wilfully against the light that shined for many years so refulgently amongst them; and not submit to the many strong and undeniable proofs Christ Jesus had given them by his works and miracles of being the Son of God and Redeemer of mankind? Now the Spirit of God, by inspiring the apostles, and filling them with divine strength to preach and establish the divinity of Christ all over the world, has convinced the world, in fact, of the sin those were guilty of who rejected the Son of God, and made him suffer besides a most cruel and ignominious death. The Spirit of God has further convinced the world of sin in this sense, that it manifestly appears from that religion which has been established all over the world, under the direction and influence of the Spirit of God, that "we are all sinners, and stand in need," as St. Paul says, "of the glory of God;" that is, his grace and his mercy.

2nd—The Spirit of God has likewise convinced the world of justice; because, although the Jews fancied that no one could be justified but by the law of Moses, yet he has made it appear, through the intervention of his apostles, that Christ Jesus is the eternal justice and righteousness itself: consequently, that there is no attaining to justice and righteousness, but by acknowledging his merits, and complying faithfully with his most just and righteous laws.

3rd—The Spirit of God has convinced the world of judgment; because it appears plainly from the establishment of Christianity, that, "all power was given unto Christ, both in heaven and on earth," as he declares himself in the Gospel; and that he has already exerted this power, by judging and condemning the prince of this world, as we have it in the Gospel of this day—that is, destroying and overturning the empire of Satan, and establishing the reign of truth, religion, and godliness on the ruins of error, idolatry, and corruption: besides that he is one day to come, as he hath promised, to judge both the living and the dead. The Spirit of God hath therefore convinced the world, not only of the judgment Christ Jesus has already passed upon Satan, the prince of this world, but likewise of the judgment he is to pass upon all mankind, as supreme judge of the living and the dead.

Consider then with yourselves, Christians, that you are all in your turn to undergo this judgment of Christ, not only on the last day, or in the general resurrection of the dead, but even the very moment you expire; for St. Paul says—"It is decreed every man shall die, and after this be judged." But what judgment are we likely to meet with at the great and

dreadful tribunal of Christ? A judgment of mercy, or a judgment of severity? Shall we be judged worthy of mercy and eternal happiness, or doomed to eternal misery and pain? One thing is certain: we will all be judged according to our works, or the manner in which we lived on earth: and our fate determined for ever agreeably to the judgment that shall be passed on us at that decisive moment of time. If this great principle of religion were always present unto our minds, undoubtedly it would prevent our doing anything that may bring us under a heavy and intolerable judgment at the tribunal of Christ. "*Memorare novissima tua.*"

Before the descent of the Spirit, the apostles themselves were ignorant, timid, and weak. "When the Spirit of truth shall come," our Saviour says, "he shall teach you all truth." It was this Divine Spirit that opened the minds of the apostles after coming down upon them; enlightened their understandings, gave them intelligence of the Scriptures, taught them, in a word, all truth, and endowed them with knowledge and courage to publish and display to the world all things relating unto God. It is the same Divine Spirit that even now guides and directs the successors of the apostles, the pastors of the Church, in every saving truth of religion, so as never to suffer them to mistake the true meaning of the Scriptures; never to approve of any point of doctrine contrary to the doctrine of Christ, nor any principles of morality, but what is agreeable to the rules and maxims of Christ. "Lo! I am with you, unto the end of the world;" not visibly in person, because he has left this world, and ascended unto his Father; but in his Divine Spirit, whom he left to his Church, to preside over it to the end of the world. Finally, it is the same Divine Spirit that now inwardly directs and instructs every one of the faithful in the execution of the laws of Christ. The children of God, St. Paul says, "are actuated by the Spirit of God. *Diffusa est gratia.*" And again the same apostle says, "we know not how to pray, but the Spirit prayeth within us with ineffable or inexpressible sighs." Therefore, every good work of ours, every step we advance towards heaven, proceeds from the Spirit of God. For it is not possible to do any good without having the previous thought and desire of doing it. Now, these thoughts and desires proceed from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. It is the Spirit of God that enlightens our understanding, and inspires us with the thoughts of prayer, or performing any other exercise of religion, and at the same time excites our hearts to carry the pious thought or inspiration into execution. As often as we obey these inward

suggestions or solicitations to good, we obey the Spirit of God; and as often as we resist them we resist the Spirit of God. "You always resist the Holy Ghost," St. Stephen said unto the Jews, when he reproached them for having put Christ Jesus to death, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles. And may not the same reproach be made in some manner to ourselves? How often have we resisted, and still continue to resist, the inward touches and inspirations of the Spirit of God? Is there any one that does not feel within himself many pious thoughts and desires? At least, let us be more attentive and faithful for the time to come, to the inward voice of the Spirit of God. He will teach us inwardly to fulfil the saving truths he has already revealed unto the Church of Christ; and thereby enable us to partake one day of the joys and glory of the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

IN the Gospel of this day, we have the comfortable promise Christ Jesus made to his disciples, that whatever they should ask his Father in his name, should be granted them. This promise of Christ Jesus is the ground-work and foundation of prayer. For if we pray, it is because Christ Jesus hath promised our prayer shall be heard. If the promise had not been made, we might indeed pray, but could have no assurance of being heard; for asking barely a favour, does not necessarily imply the favour must be granted. On the contrary, it follows, from the very nature of prayer or petition, that it may be granted or rejected, inasmuch as the execution depends entirely on the will of the person to whom the prayer is made. But if Christ Jesus hath promised our prayer shall be heard, there can be no room for doubt or hesitation, because he was God, and the Son of God, and because what a God promises must necessarily be fulfilled; otherwise he were guilty of a falsehood and deception, which is entirely inconsistent with the very notion all mankind have of the Divinity.

Now that he hath promised is plain from the words of the Gospel this day—"If you ask my Father anything in my name, he will give it you." Here then we have, first—the express and solemn promise of Christ Jesus, that our prayers shall be heard: and second—the condition on which the promise is made, viz., praying in the name of Christ Jesus alone, "If you ask my Father anything in my name." For St. Paul observes, "It is through Christ Jesus alone that we have access unto

his Heavenly Father, as he is the only mediator of power and merit between God and man." All other intercession or application derives its merit from, and must terminate in, the intercession of Christ. Christ Jesus, by praying for us unto his Father, while he lived upon earth, has merited and obtained that our prayers should be agreeable unto God, and after obtaining this, he signified it unto man, by the promise he hath made, that "whatever we should ask his Father in his name, should be granted us;" and this is the reason why the Church always terminates the prayers and orations of the public liturgy or divine service, in the name and through the merits of Christ.

But what is it Christ Jesus hath promised should be granted us? All the spiritual blessings that are necessary for our salvation. The forgiveness of our sins, the graces and assistances we stand in need of to fulfil his holy law, and persevere in justice and righteousness unto the end of our lives. For, be pleased to observe, there are on the side of man two great obstacles to salvation—his sins and his weakness. His sins, were they not forgiven, would for ever exclude him from the kingdom of heaven; nor would his weakness suffer him to fulfil the law, which is a necessary title to the kingdom of heaven. What Christ Jesus hath then promised, after obtaining it himself through his own merits, is the remission of our sins, and the graces whereby we are enabled to overcome our natural weakness, fulfil the law, and by fulfilling the law, become entitled to the kingdom of heaven. I have said, Christians, that Christ hath promised us the spiritual blessings that are necessary for salvation, because there are many spiritual blessings, such as the power of working miracles, the gift of tongues, the gift of prophecy or contemplation, which are not requisite for salvation, nor consequently implied in the promises of Christ. These are pure gratuitous gifts, he grants to whom and when he thinks proper, for the manifestation of his own glory; but has not promised them to the faithful in general, or to any one, as they are unnecessary for salvation.

Second—Christ Jesus hath promised us, likewise, such temporal blessings as may be necessary for us; and this appears from one of the petitions of our Lord's prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." Third—He has promised such temporal blessings as may be useful and conducive to our salvation, as in the case of persons often restored to health by the prayers of holy men, when their recovery was necessary to give them time to repent. From this it follows, that in consequence of the promise Christ hath made us, every one of the

faithful has a right to call for, and expect from the bounty of God, through the merits of Christ, all the spiritual blessings he stands in need of, and likewise such temporal advantages as are necessary for the support of life or may be conducive to his eternal happiness. As for anything else, either wealth, prosperity, health, or success, in temporal affairs, they were never promised; nor have we any right to call for them, but with the restrictions and limitations I have mentioned. But the misfortune is, that people are vastly more anxious for the advantages of this world (that are not included in the promise, and which they never will receive, at least in consequence of prayer) than for the spiritual blessings that are promised absolutely, and without any condition or restriction; and which they would infallibly receive, did they call for them in the name, and through the merits of Christ Jesus, as we have it set forth in the Gospel of this day.

What, then, have we to do, Christians? To pray fervently and frequently in the name and through the merits of Christ Jesus. For it is impossible for us to fulfil the law, which is a necessary condition for attaining to eternal happiness, but by the grace and assistance of God; nor can we receive the grace and assistance of God but by prayer. "Ask, and you shall receive," our Saviour says; "seek, and you shall find." If we do not ask, we will not receive; if we do not seek, we shall not find. The Almighty God, it is most certain, could indeed relieve us in all our wants, without any prayer or application on our side, if he thought proper so to do—but he is pleased to act otherwise; and orders, that relief be called for before he grants it, in order to keep us in continual subjection to him, and thereby manifest his supreme dominion over all his creatures. But how many are there that neglect complying with this wise and necessary disposition of Providence, who seldom pray, and never as they ought? How many are there that let whole and whole weeks pass, without making the least application to the Lord? Without laying their wants and necessities before him, and calling for his most powerful assistance? Too many, indeed! Is it then surprising they should feel the whole weight of the corruption of human nature? That they should be slaves to their passions, and so weak as to yield to every temptation, and transgress the divine laws as often as the occasion offers? If they would but pray, and pray frequently and fervently, and pray in the name and through the merits of Christ Jesus, they certainly would receive such graces and assistance as would enable them to subdue their passions, resist every temptation, and fulfil the law in every

material point. If they would but pray, they would obtain the grace to persevere in justice and righteousness to the very end of their lives, and, by that means, become partakers of all the joys and glory of the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE ASCENSION.

ON THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

THE Church of God, Christians, in commemorating during this octave the ascension of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, proposes to our consideration what the Scripture relates of that mystery which is the end or completion of the life of Christ upon earth. Although our Saviour had frequently told his disciples that his stay amongst them was to be but short—that he would soon quit them and ascend unto his Father, yet he never informed them of the day or moment of his departure. This they remained ignorant of until the very moment it happened, which was forty days after his resurrection from the dead. In the Acts of the Apostles, we read that Christ Jesus, after shewing himself alive for forty days after his passion unto his disciples; after acquainting them that their chief business should be to attest his resurrection from the dead, over all Judea and Samaria, to the remotest parts of the earth; and after commanding them not to depart from Jerusalem until they received the Holy Ghost, whom he had promised to send: we read, I say, in the first chapter of the Acts, that Christ Jesus, after all these things, whilst he and his apostles were assembled together on Mount Olivet, was raised up to heaven in their presence, the eyes of his apostles being constantly fixed upon him as he ascended, until at length a cloud concealed him from their view.

On this occasion it is easy to conceive the joy and sorrow that alternately agitated the minds of the apostles—joy for this sublime end of all the sufferings of their Lord on earth; and sorrow for their individual loss, in being deprived of the divine presence of their Master. During the time that Christ Jesus lay in the sepulchre, after expiring on the cross, they certainly must have felt the deepest affliction. Yet the very hopes they had of seeing him risen from the dead the third day, as he had foretold, must have been a great mitigation of their sorrow; and their hopes fulfilled in his resurrection, must have turned their sorrow into the liveliest joy. After a short privation they beheld him, and became once more blessed with his presence. Even on the third day, Christ Jesus manifested himself to, and

conversed with his disciples, and continued conversing with them upon several occasions for forty days. But at his ascension his apostles could have no hopes of ever seeing him again, until they were to join him in his heavenly kingdom ; which must undoubtedly have filled their hearts with sorrow, anxiety, and anguish.

This is certainly the reason why they continued, as the sacred text informs us, in the same place, their eyes lifted up towards heaven, and fixed upon the way our blessed Redeemer took to ascend unto his Heavenly Father. As their hearts and affections were centred in their Master, they would at least follow him in spirit, and contemplate with grief and delight the very track or vestige of his departure from this world. Here they remained entirely taken up with, or rather lost in contemplation of, Christ Jesus ascending into heaven, until they were interrupted by the apparition of two angels, clothed in white, who said unto them, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand thus looking up to heaven? That same Jesus who has been taken up to heaven before your eyes, shall come again," that is, at the last day, "as you have seen him going up to heaven."

From this admonition the apostles conceived it was not their own private gratification they were to consider, so much as the great and important ministry they were charged with, viz., bearing witness to Christ, or attesting the resurrection and divinity of Christ Jesus, all over Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest parts of the earth, as Christ Jesus had directed them a little before his ascension into heaven. Wherefore they immediately departed from Mount Olivet, and returned to Jerusalem, where they continued in a large upper apartment with many other disciples of the Lord, in prayer and retirement, until the coming of the Holy Ghost ; which happened a few days after the ascension of Christ into heaven.

This ascension of Christ Jesus into heaven, is, 1st—the triumph of human nature, and, 2nd—the solid foundation of the hopes of mankind. 1st—It is the triumph of human nature, because it was by the ascension of Christ Jesus that human nature was put in possession of the glory of heaven, in the person of Christ. For although the humanity of Christ enjoyed a high degree of happiness by being united to the divinity, yet that exaltation which was due to the merits of Christ, as appears from these words of St. Paul, "Christ hath humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ; for which reason God hath exalted him"

—this exaltation, I say, was not obtained but by the ascension of Christ into heaven. It is in heaven alone that the humanity of Christ was put in possession of the supreme power given him by his Almighty Father, both in heaven and on earth.

Before the ascension of Christ, human nature never was admitted to a participation of the glory of heaven. The most holy and righteous men that lived, since the beginning of the world, were all excluded from heaven and detained in prison, free from pain, but deprived of the sight of God. It was at the ascension of Christ, after being released from their confinement, that they entered the kingdom of heaven; for St. Paul says, speaking of Christ Jesus, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. 4, "Ascending on high, he led captivity captive;" that is, those that were detained in confinement since the beginning of the world. This ascension of Christ was clearly foretold to the apostles. David also says in his 23rd Psalm, "Lift up your gates, ye princes," meaning the angels or princes of heaven, "and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates! and the King of Glory shall enter in." And again, in his 57th Psalm, "Be exalted above the heavens, O God, and thy glory upon all the earth!" The ascension of Christ is, therefore, most properly the triumph of human nature, because it was at the ascension that human nature, both in the person of Christ Jesus, and of the just that accompanied him in his ascension, was put in possession of the glory of heaven.

Let us fancy ourselves, Christians, upon Mount Olivet, and contemplate in spirit the ascension of Christ Jesus, with the glorious troop that followed him into the kingdom of heaven. What sentiments must arise in our hearts from a consideration of this kind! What strong and earnest desires should we not entertain of going along with them, and sharing in the glory and happiness they were then put in possession of! Were all the riches and empires upon earth at our disposal, we certainly would bestow them to attain this great and happy end. To mount with Christ Jesus into heaven, and reign with him for ever in his heavenly kingdom, in the blessed society of his angels, and of his saints, would certainly outweigh every other consideration, and make us look down with contempt on the trifling and insignificant advantages of this miserable and perishing world. But let us remember that we shall never ascend to Christ Jesus into heaven, but by following his steps upon earth. This blessing is promised to none, nor will be granted to any, but such as live up to his maxims, and sincerely intend to fulfil his laws in this life.

The ascension of Christ Jesus into heaven is not only the triumph of human nature, but likewise, 2nd—the solid foundation of the hopes of mankind; for our Saviour said to his disciples a little before his ascension—"It is expedient for you that I go: I am going to prepare a place for you, that where I am you also may be." Therefore, as Christ Jesus has, by his ascension, taken possession of his kingdom, all his disciples have a right, according to his promise and declaration, to expect a place therein. "He is our head," St. Paul observes, "and we are his members;" "and the members" as he further observes, "have an undoubted right to be united to their head." Besides, Christ Jesus, by ascending into heaven, not only has pointed the way to, and shown us the place that are destined for us, but is ever since employing his intercession as man, that we may attain to those places: for St. Paul says "that Christ Jesus is always living at the right hand of his Father to intercede for us;" and St. John declares "we have an advocate in heaven, Christ Jesus," who is continually pleading our cause with his Father; that is, appeasing his anger, averting the dreadful punishments due to our sins, and soliciting his Father's mercies in our favour. It is in the kingdom of heaven, whither Christ Jesus ascended, that he is continually presenting to his Father the blood he had shed, and the wounds he had received, for the redemption of mankind. And what impressions must an application of this nature have on the heart of God! We read in the Old Testament that the Almighty complained aloud of the violence offered by Moses, who, by his prayers and intercession, forced and compelled him, in some measure, to lay aside the thoughts he had of chastising his own people with the utmost severity, although they were highly guilty. Now, if the intercession of Moses could be so effectual, so irresistible, what must that of Christ Jesus be, considered as man in the kingdom of heaven? Undoubtedly it must surpass all conception and imagination. Let us therefore go with confidence to the throne of grace, as St. Paul directs, because "we have a High Priest in heaven, Jesus the Son of God," who is continually offering up unto his Father the great sacrifice he offered upon the cross for the redemption of mankind. Through his intercession and merits we certainly shall "receive mercy in seasonable aid;" that is, such graces as may enable us to ascend to Christ Jesus after this life, and dwell for ever with him in the delights and joys of the life to come. Amen.

WHITSUNDAY.

THE great event to which the Church calls your attention this day, is, the descent or coming down of the Holy Ghost on the apostles, in the shape of tongues of fire; and it claims your attention so much the more, because it is not only a commemoration of a past event, but a real renewal of the same, in favour of all the faithful who are duly prepared. Let us then consider it as recorded in Holy Writ, both with regard to the astonishing effects which this Divine Spirit produced in the minds and hearts of the apostles, and those which the same Spirit will produce in us, if we oppose no obstacles to his designs.

We read, then, in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter ii, that fifty days after the glorious resurrection of our Lord from the dead, ten days after his triumphant ascension into heaven, on the very day that the Jews celebrated the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai, the disciples being altogether in one place, "there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting, and there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to, speak."

Such was the outward manifestation—but how wonderful the inward effects! This Divine Spirit, with which the apostles were filled, was to them, and is, proportionally, to us, a Spirit of Truth, a Spirit of Sanctity, and a Spirit of Strength. A Spirit of Truth, because, replenishing us with his divine light, he guides us into all truth; a Spirit of Sanctity, because uniting himself to us, he removes from us every obstacle to sanctity; a Spirit of Strength, because he enables us to do and suffer everything that God's law requires of us. He was a Spirit of Truth to the apostles—in a single instant he persuaded them of truths the most harsh in appearance, and the most disagreeable to every sense of nature; and this, at the same time, without any previous disposition, nay, with every obstacle on their side; for they were dull, stupid, heavy, and ignorant, as Christ himself reproached them for their imperfections—though they had been for three years under the tuition of this Divine Master, yet did they not seem to be much more enlightened by his instructions. But the instant that they received this Divine Spirit, the truths that before had appeared so incredible, now, with the most glaring light manifest themselves. To renounce the world and themselves, is no

longer a mystery ; they see into the secret springs whence this doctrine flows, as well as its glorious consequences. To bear their cross, and carry it with patience, is no more a misfortune ; to love their enemies, and pardon the most flagrant injuries, they no more reckon a weakness nor a meanness of spirit, but the standard of magnanimity, and the true test of greatness of soul. The riches and honours of this world are no more considered a happiness, nor persecution an evil ; whereas they glory in being free from any tie to the world, and rejoice when found worthy to suffer the greatest torments and ignominy for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Such was the effect this Divine Spirit had on the minds of the Apostles ; nor was it confined to them alone, but diffused itself daily to the multitude of people, both men and women, who were firmly determined to forfeit their lives rather than deviate from the light they had received. The same would also be produced in us, did we not oppose obstacles to the operations of divine grace.

Now, my dear brethren, let us enter impartially into ourselves, and examine by what spirit we are governed ; is it by the light of the Spirit of God ? Do we believe, by a pure and lively faith, that to be a Christian, it is necessary not only to bear our cross, but likewise to look upon it as glorious and honourable to bear it ? that to follow Christ Jesus you must not only detach your heart from the world, but even from yourselves ? that you must not only forget the injury received, but still return good for evil ? Do you believe, without hesitation, all these moral truths the apostles not only did believe on the moment they received the Holy Ghost, but for every one of which they were even ready to lay down their lives ? Are you resolved, I will not say to die for them, but to bring your corrupt inclinations into subjection, so that you should not transgress them ? Has the Spirit of God wrought this effect in your hearts ; or do you think he has entered into your hearts, there to preside and govern ?

Perhaps you will be humble enough to say that he has not entered into your heart ; and that you want only the light of that Divine Spirit to conduct you in your actions. Nothing is more common than to make this answer, and charge to the want of grace that sin, which, but for the abuse of grace, would never have been committed. But the Spirit of truth will always triumph over that falsehood, and convince you that your iniquity did not proceed from the want of light and divine grace, but because, when offered, you ever resisted it : "ye always resist the Holy Ghost." Let us co-operate with

the lights we already have, and God will increase their splendour, and be not only a Spirit of truth to enlighten us, but a Spirit of strength and power to enable us to discharge every point of his divine law.

This powerful and strengthening effect of the Spirit of God never was more manifest than on the solemnity of this day, when men, I mean the apostles, who before were weak, timid, or cowardly, became in an instant, by the virtue of this Divine Spirit, inflamed with a most fervent zeal—a zeal that emboldened them to declare themselves openly, to undertake the most hazardous enterprises, and to suffer, for the honour of Christ, the greatest hardships this world could inflict.

The apostles had scarce received this Divine Spirit, when they began, at once, to manifest and declare themselves. And what was their first essay? Ashamed of that dastardly spirit which had hitherto made them afraid to show themselves, and stand out for the honour of their Divine Master, they issue forth at once into all public places, and there openly publish and declare that the Man, lately condemned to the ignominious death of the cross by the unjust sentence of Pilate, was the true Messias, and the Lord's Anointed—that though delivered up to death, it was by his own free choice; and that he was the Sovereign Master of life and death, which he clearly manifested by raising himself from death to life—that they were ocular witnesses to this truth; that they must testify it, and could not resist the power of the Holy Ghost, who took possession of their hearts, and spake through their mouths!

This Divine Spirit gave them courage not only to speak their minds freely, but even to undertake and execute things far above the reach of all human power. For who were those to carry on what they had in view? Twelve poor fishermen, without talents, without credit, without reputation, who were looked upon as the scum of the earth, but still men who, possessed by the Spirit of God, had nothing less in view than to convert and enlighten the whole world! And what resources had they to accomplish this great work? No other, my God, but the force of thy Divine Spirit! It was he that enabled them to bear down all before them—the learned as well as the ignorant, the most polite nations as well as the most barbarous; kings as well as their subjects. It was through him they were proof against every opposition, and, in spite of every opposition, of every persecution, of every torment, attained their object, which was the establishment of the true Church of Jesus Christ!

Such again were the operations of the Spirit of God, not only in the apostles and primitive Christians, but likewise in every just soul ; and hence it is that we can easily discern whether we are animated by this Divine Spirit or not.

For to believe that you have received this Divine Spirit, and not dare to declare openly for God ; to be silent when you are bound to speak, and shamefully turn aside when God's honour calls for a sacrifice ; to believe that you have received the Spirit of God, and do nothing for the love of God ; to be heavy and sluggish in his service, without the least zeal for his interest, the least endeavour for the promotion of his honour and glory ; to believe that you have received the Spirit of God, and never to suffer the least grievance for his sake ; to look upon every enterprise where his honour is concerned to be difficult, if not impossible ; to think that such a conduct is compatible with the residence of the Holy Ghost, is an error too gross to be entertained in the mind of a Christian.

Let us, then, strenuously labour to promote the interest of God, in what regards his worship, his Church, and his law. Let us not be discouraged by the obstacles that may stand in the way ; for the Spirit of God will strengthen us, and make us victorious. As we must meet with contradictions, so we should be ever prepared with patience to withstand them, and derive from thence, as the apostles did, both merit and comfort in this life, and the reward of the one and completion of the other, as the apostles do, in the glory and happiness of life everlasting. Amen.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

THIS day, Christians, the Church commemorates and solemnizes a mystery which is undoubtedly the greatest mystery of our holy religion. The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is an abridgment of all the mysteries of our faith, as all the mysteries of our faith relate unto one or other of the divine Persons—the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost. This mystery of the Trinity is the very characteristic of the Christian religion ; or that mystery which characterizes the Christian religion, and distinguishes it from all other religions upon earth. The Pagan acknowledges and adores many gods, or more than one God ; the Jew, one only God, without distinction of Persons : but the Christian alone acknowledges and adores one only God in three distinct Persons, and three Persons in one only God. It is, therefore, the mystery of the Trinity

that distinguishes chiefly and principally the Christian religion from all others upon earth.

It is not only the belief, but the knowledge of this mystery, that is peculiar to the Christians alone. The Jews themselves were entirely unacquainted with it; although to them, in particular, the prophets had been sent from the beginning, by whom they were frequently instructed in many sublime points of religion. They had, indeed, a notion of a Redeemer, by whose merits they should be saved, as he was frequently promised and foretold by the prophets; and the belief of a Messiah was then necessary towards salvation. "There is no other name under heaven whereby we must be saved." But the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity was never revealed unto them, except to a few. The revelation of this mystery was reserved for the law of grace, and communicated unto mankind by Christ Jesus himself. For St. John, in the fifth chapter of his First Epistle, says, "There are three that give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are ONE." Here the trinity of persons, and the unity of the divine nature, are set forth in the clearest terms. Besides, when Christ Jesus commissioned his apostles to preach the Gospel all over the world, he ordered them to "go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," which words visibly imply the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity. Upon these concurrent passages of the New Testament, the Church of Christ grounds the belief of the Most Holy Trinity, and proposes it as a necessary means of salvation, insomuch that we cannot expect salvation without knowing and believing explicitly this mystery of the Most Holy Trinity.

There are several points of Revelation which it is not necessary for all the faithful to know and believe explicitly, in order to be saved. No; it is enough to believe points of this nature implicitly, or to believe, in general, all that God hath revealed unto his Church. There are other points which we must absolutely know and explicitly believe; namely, this mystery of the Adorable Trinity, and the Incarnation of God, the Second Person of this Most Holy Trinity, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, because they are the very foundation of religion and of salvation. For this reason, the knowledge of these mysteries is conveyed by the Church, almost in every practice and ceremony of religion. The very first lesson we are taught in our infancy, informs us of one God in three persons, and three persons in one God. When we are baptized it is in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

In confirmation, the same words are employed. The absolution is given in the tribunal of penance in the very same manner. The very blessing used by the faithful in the beginning of every religious action, is conceived in the same terms. Why so? Because the explicit knowledge and belief of this mystery being absolutely necessary for salvation, the Church of God has employed every method to make the knowledge thereof as common and universal amongst the faithful as possible.

But how is it possible to conceive that there can be three persons in one only God, and one only God in three persons? It is not indeed possible to conceive it; because it is a mystery which surpasses by many degrees the comprehension of man. However, as this mystery seems to carry more darkness with it than any other, even with respect to those that have all the docility of faith, and firmly believe whatever was revealed, the holy fathers have taken some pains to illustrate and reconcile it in some measure to our thoughts. For this purpose, they say that God the Father, knowing his divine essence and perfections from eternity, and having a clear and distinct idea thereof, must necessarily have produced an image of his perfections in his eternal Mind. This image is the Son, or the Word, as St. John styles him, because he is the expression, the splendour, and the bright effulgence of the Divinity. The Father seeing the Word, or the expression and image of his divine perfections, must necessarily be inflamed with mutual love. From this mutual love proceeds the Holy Ghost.

The Son then is engendered by the Father alone; but the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. From this manner of conceiving the Trinity, it plainly follows, agreeable to the doctrine of the Church, that these three Persons must be co-eval, co-equal, and co-eternal. Co-eval from all eternity, co-equal in all power and perfection, and co-eternal as existing to eternity, without the possibility of change or alteration. Without beginning, without ending, without limitation, these three divine Persons is ONE GOD, blessed for ever. These three adorable persons possessing the same divine nature and essence, it plainly follows they must all be concerned alike in every work of the Divinity, so that what the Father does, the Son and Holy Ghost must likewise do. Nevertheless, as these divine Persons stand in different relations, so different works may justly be attributed to each. As the Father engendered the Son, so the works of power and creation are attributed to the Father. As the Son is the image or expression of the Father, so the works of wisdom and design are attributed to the Son; as the Holy Ghost proceeds from the mutual love of

the Father and the Son, so the works of sanctification are attributed to the Holy Ghost, because our sanctification is visibly the effect of the love of God towards mankind.

Thus much the fathers and divines have thought proper to say concerning the Most Holy Trinity—a mystery that should be adorned with the most profound faith, adoration, and love. It is here the exercise of faith becomes indispensably necessary and meritorious, in believing those revealed truths which eyes do not see, nor can human understanding comprehend. The foundation or pillar on which this faith is grounded, is God himself; as he has been pleased to reveal those truths, and what he reveals must necessarily be true. “By faith the just man lives, and without faith it is impossible to please God. Happy are they who believe and do not see.” If, therefore, we believe what God has revealed, we must adore his infinite goodness in revealing it; and our hearts must be hard indeed, if, in contemplating this mystery of the Glorious Trinity and its dispensations towards man, they be not inflamed with love. To believe then the mystery of the Trinity becomes our first duty, and to cherish this belief, because it is the hinge of the Christian religion. In the second place, to adore and worship the Most Holy Trinity within our breast, saying with the Church, “Glory be the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.” And, lastly, to testify frequently our love and gratitude for all the blessings the Most Holy Trinity has been pleased to confer upon us—the Father by creating us in his image and likeness—the Son by redeeming us with his blood, and the Holy Ghost by sanctifying us with his gifts. This is undoubtedly the very substance and purest spirit of religion—vastly more excellent, more perfect and meritorious in the eyes of God than any other devotion you can think of. If you do this, you certainly will one day be admitted to see what now seems inconceivable, the divine Majesty of the Most Adorable Trinity, unveiled before your eyes in the celestial mansions of God. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

WHAT does this great entertainment signify of which mention is made in the Gospel of this day? The holy fathers say it signifies the divine food which Christ Jesus hath prepared for the faithful in the Blessed Eucharist; and the Church likewise understands it in this light, inasmuch as she hath chosen this parable for the Gospel of this day, which is sacred to the

honour and memory of the institution of the Blessed Eucharist. As Christ Jesus hath given mankind in general a very signal proof of the most unbounded love in instituting that sacrament, in which he is to remain amongst us, to comfort, assist, and even feed our souls with his own sacred flesh, unto the end of the world—so the Church has thought proper to honour and commemorate so great and inestimable a blessing by a particular festival, that festival which the Church is now celebrating during this whole octave or eight days. What, therefore, the faithful should employ themselves in during this festival, is honouring Christ Jesus in his holy sacrament, and testifying their gratitude and love for the blessings that are derived from thence. It is in this sacrament Christ Jesus hath in reality prepared an entertainment truly grand—grand in itself, as containing no less than the body and blood of Christ—grand on account of the grace it imparts : when a God gives himself, what blessings must he not bestow !—grand, on account of the prodigious numbers that are called thereto ; it is prepared for all the faithful in general—grand in its duration, as it is to last to the end of the world !

“ When the entertainment was ready, the Master sent forth his servants,” the Gospel says, “ to call those that had been invited to the banquet ;” but they excused themselves on various occasions or pretences—some from a necessity of looking after their lands, others of minding their cattle, and others of attending their wife and family. Is not this, Christians, visibly the case with the greater part of the faithful of our days ? Christ Jesus is daily visiting them by the ministers of his Church, and inviting them to the heavenly banquet he has prepared for them in the holy Eucharist. But how far do they comply with his kind and generous invitations ? Do they willingly and readily accept thereof ? Do they go, when called, and sit down at the table of the Lord ? No, Christians, quite the reverse. How many are there, to the eternal shame and disgrace of Christianity, who do not partake of the celestial banquet Christ Jesus hath prepared for them in his holy sacrament but once a year ; and even then with the greatest reluctance and want of desire, and other necessary dispositions, merely because they are compelled thereunto under pain of incurring the heaviest censures of the Church—under pain of excommunication. Is this, Christians, complying with the views and invitations of Christ Jesus ? Undoubtedly it is not. What, then, will the consequence be ? We read it plainly in the Gospel of this day. When the Master was told by his servants, that those that had been

invited refused to come, he said unto them with anger—"Behold, I tell you, not one of those that had been called, shall ever taste of my supper;" that is, shall ever share in my favours; nor consequently partake of the joys and glory of the kingdom of heaven. Sad lot, indeed, for those who unhappily continue deaf to the invitations of Christ Jesus!

O Christians! had we a true spirit of faith, or were we governed by the Spirit of God, we should think it the greatest happiness in the world to be admitted frequently to the table of the Lord, and do all that lies in our power to procure ourselves that great and inestimable blessing; for it cannot be doubted, but the participation of the Blessed Eucharist is attended with the most valuable favours we can either expect or receive; as we then receive the author of all grace within us, what graces have we not a right to expect at his hands? When Christ Jesus condescends to come and dwell in our hearts, must not the greatest blessings come along with him? "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood," our Saviour says, in the sixth chapter of St. John, "hath life everlasting, and I will raise him up at the last day." From which words it plainly follows, that the participation of the body and blood of Christ in this sacrament, is a pledge or earnest of eternal happiness.

Seeing therefore, Christians, that the heavenly food or banquet which Christ Jesus hath prepared for us in this sacrament is productive of the greatest advantages to our souls, how comes it to pass that the greater part of the Christians of our days are so backward in going to his heavenly banquet, and partaking of the blessings attendant upon it? Should some great and mighty prince invite the meanest of his subjects to come and sit at his table, and at the same time give the strongest assurances of his love and protection, how readily would they all embrace the generous offer! But here our Lord and Redeemer, Christ Jesus, is daily inviting the faithful to come and partake of the blessings he hath promised and prepared for them in his sacrament; and his bountiful invitations are daily rejected and daily overlooked! What can this, Christians, be owing to? Undoubtedly to our want of faith, or our having no relish for the things of God; to the love of the world, which prevails so strongly in the breasts of the greater part, as to extinguish entirely the love of God, and leave no taste or desire for the things of God.

How is it possible, you will say, for people that are engaged, and deeply engaged in the world, to pretend to go frequently to the table of the Lord? How was it possible for

the primitive Christians so to do? they were as deeply engaged in the world as any of the Christians of our days. They had their business, their families, and employments; yet they took care to receive the sacrament of the Lord every day of their lives. That day would have hung heavy on their minds in which they had not nourished their souls with the celestial food, which is distributed in the sacrament of the Lord! Why so? Because they lived up to the principles of their faith, and were convinced that the blessings derived from the sacrament were of vastly greater consequence than all the perishable riches of this world. Were we governed by the same principles, we should certainly act in the same manner; but as we act in a quite different manner, it is plain our principles must likewise be of a quite different nature. But does it not require an extraordinary degree of sanctity to approach frequently to the table of the Lord? It requires an exemption from all considerable sin, and that from the dignity of this sacrament, which contains the Author of all purity, sanctity, and holiness. Without this essential degree of sanctity, going frequently to the table of the Lord, instead of being beneficial, would certainly prove extremely destructive to our souls. It requires likewise a true and sincere resolution of improving in virtue, and attaining to that degree of Christian perfection, which is consistent with our respective stations in the world. For it is not enough not to profane or abuse the sacrament of the Lord, we must likewise honour and respect it. Now this honour and respect chiefly consist in retrenching not only every considerable sin, but likewise in retrenching, or at least endeavouring to retrench every smaller transgression, as even this must necessarily be disagreeable unto Christ Jesus. It is not therefore necessary, Christians, that we be perfect, in order to approach to the table of the Lord. No: If this were the case, we should never partake of that divine food; for we never are, nor never will be perfect; and never to partake of that divine food is evidently contrary to the intentions of Christ Jesus, and the commands of the Church, as well as the practice of the saints in every age, who all made it a constant rule to partake frequently of that divine bread, "which," St. John says, "came down from heaven." All that is necessary is, that we aim at, and labour for, a certain degree of perfection; for we read in the Gospel this day, that "the poor and the feeble, the blind and the lame, were invited to the entertainment," which words the holy fathers expound of those that are yet weak and feeble in the ways of God. In the beginning, Christians, you may be weak, infirm, and imperfect;

but the frequent use of the sacrament of the Lord will soon strengthen you to such a pitch, as to make you conquer your passions, triumph with ease over all the obstacles of salvation, and fulfil all your obligations, in which true virtue and perfection consist.

What, then, should we resolve upon, Christians? To go frequently to the table of the Lord with all the care and preparation we are capable of. Remember that the last consolation the Church administers unto the faithful, at their dying hour, is the participation of his heavenly banquet. With what fear, apprehension, diffidence, and terror, or rather with what secret desperation, will those receive the body and blood of Christ at that dreadful period, who seldom or never received it during the course of their lives! But on the contrary, with what joy, confidence, and assurance will all those receive it, who during their lives had frequently approached it! Then they certainly will perceive within themselves, that from this banquet they are to be called unto the enjoyment of another, of which the former was only an image—the joys and glory of the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

NOTHING, Christians, can give us a clearer or better notion of the infinite goodness and boundless mercy of Christ Jesus, than what we have set forth in the Gospel of this day. As his intention in coming down from heaven, and assuming human nature, was to redeem the world from sin, he took every opportunity of conversing with sinners, even the greatest sinners, such as publicans and tax-gatherers, in order to reclaim them from their sinful ways, and bring them over to the ways of eternal happiness, true justice and righteousness. This condescension of Christ Jesus, which was worthy the bounty and goodness of a God, could not escape the censure of the proud, austere, hypocritical Pharisees, who, knowing that Christ Jesus was looked upon as a man full of the Spirit of God, and as a great prophet, were highly offended at his conversing and mixing publicly with sinners; without reflecting that it is the greatest sinners who stand most in need of the mercies of God, according to the words of Christ in the Gospel. “It is not those that are sound and hale, that require the care and skill of a physician, but the feeble, the disordered, and the sick.” And elsewhere he tells us, “he was particularly sent unto the sheep that had gone astray out of the house of Israel.”

Hence we may learn the injustice and iniquity of the judgments of men. The most virtuous actions are commonly traced by them, and represented in the most injurious light. The effects of the purest charity and zeal, generally pass in their eyes for the effects of interest or passion. Whatsoever mostly draws the attention and applause of heaven, is no more to them than an object of censure and reproach. Nothing could be more zealous, more charitable, more merciful than Christ Jesus conversing with sinners, in order to convert them; yet this proved the very occasion of Pharisaic reprehension. Are there not many amongst us of this Pharisaic turn of mind, who are all indulgence to themselves, and all severity to others? The moment they see even the appearance of a fault in their neighbour, their false and fiery zeal is inflamed to the highest pitch, so as to break out frequently into bitter invective, malignant insinuation, obloquy, and censure. They readily discern the least mote in their neighbour's eye, but cannot discern the beam, so very remarkable in their own. Let these hypocrites, as Christ Jesus directs, first remove the beam out of their own eye, before they undertake to withdraw the mote from that of their neighbour. How, then, is a man to act upon occasions of this kind? Guardedly, respecting the judgment he passes upon the actions of other men. As often as an action can admit of a good construction, it is justice and charity to understand it in that light: and to do otherwise argues manifestly prejudice, injustice, or the want of charity. As for the censure of others, we should be always ready to despise it; provided we do nothing contrary to the law of God, worthy the censure of rational and virtuous men. "What is it to me," St. Paul says, "what you, or any body else may think me? It is not by you I am to be judged, but by the living God."

The vain opinion of the world is, nevertheless, Christians, the general pursuit of the greater part of mankind. Their object is not what pleases God, but man. The anger of God they do not fear, but the displeasure of man they dread. To please mankind, they make no difficulty to offend the Almighty Ruler of men: to procure or preserve the friendship of the world, they will not hesitate to forfeit the favour and esteem of heaven. But what says Christ Jesus? "Do not fear those that kill the body, but cannot touch the soul; but fear him who can destroy both body and soul." People must go, they say, according to the world; and one is certainly despised or censured that does not act like the rest of mankind. But is it the laws of the world we are to be judged by, or the laws of Christ? What will the

approbation of man avail at the tribunal of God? When the Almighty God will reproach you for having violated and transgressed his holy laws, of what service will it be to you to say, that you only acted according to the laws and maxims of the world? Will not the Almighty God then ask you, if it were the laws of the world you were to obey, or his divine commands? If, therefore, to comply with the world, and again the esteem and good will of the world, you refuse to comply with the laws of God, the Almighty God will certainly say unto you, at the last day, as Christ Jesus hath said in the Gospel, "He that is ashamed to confess me before man, him will I be ashamed to confess before my Father who is in heaven."

If any of you, our Saviour says, had a hundred sheep, and lost one of them, would he not immediately quit the ninety-nine, and go in quest of that which had gone astray? And, after finding it, would he not put it upon his shoulders, and carry it home with joy? Even then would he not call his friends together, and say unto them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost; I say unto you, that so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that doth penance, more than over ninety-nine just, who stand not in need of penance." From these words would not one imagine the Almighty God had some particular interest in converting a sinner, and bringing him into the ways of eternal happiness? Nevertheless, he can have no other interest in it than of making his creatures eternally happy. For he is all-sufficient in himself, and enjoyed in himself, even before the world was created, the completest happiness. If, therefore, he takes any pains for us mortals, it is with no other view than to rescue us from eternal misery, and put us in possession of the kingdom of heaven.

Consider then, Christians, how much we are all indebted to the infinite goodness of God, for the pains he has taken to make us eternally happy. We all have been like so many sheep that had gone astray. We are all astray, perhaps, as yet. To save us from perdition, the Almighty God has sent his only Son down upon earth, to take human nature upon him, and by his death to deliver us from sin, and the eternal punishments that are justly due to sin. Every day, perhaps every moment of our lives, he is inciting us by the voice of his ministers, or by the inward solicitations of his holy grace, to forsake our errors and sinful ways, and return to the obedience we owe unto his holy law. But how far has he succeeded in this generous design? Has he yet been able to bring us back from our sinful ways? Do we not daily resist

his tender invitations to repentance? The Almighty God is continually seeking for us, and we are continually flying from his tender pursuits. Recollect, I beseech you, what the royal prophet says, "If to-day you shall hear the voice of the Lord, harden not your hearts." For the consequence of resisting continually the voice and calls of heaven, must be, that the Almighty will no longer seek for, but abandon us to our own corruption; and in the end, give us up a prey to the devouring flames of hell. "You shall seek me, and shall not find me," saith the Lord in the day of his anger. The way to prevent this misfortune is, to return speedily and sincerely unto the Lord. If we do, we shall certainly cause an excessive joy in heaven, and likewise become one day partakers of eternal happiness. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ONE of the greatest dangers even the just are exposed to in this life is a certain indolence, which banishes apprehension, and fills the minds with the false hopes of certain security. Then we are apt to let go the anchor of faith, slacken in our devotions, become less wary in our deportment, and insensibly lay aside the only safeguard of virtue—the practice of piety and good works. This deceitful indolence being therefore the forerunner of our eternal ruin, it is of the last importance to root it up by Christian vigilance—that vigilance prescribed by Christ Jesus, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;" that vigilance urged by St. Paul, "Let him who thinks he standeth, beware lest he fall;" that vigilance, without which, from the infirmities of our nature, it will be impossible ever to attain life everlasting.

Surrounded, as we are, by powerful enemies, both internal and external, who daily attack and interrupt our progress to the kingdom of God, which we are justly entitled to by the merits of Christ, we are bound to take example by that wise prince mentioned by our Saviour in the Gospel, whose kingdom being threatened by a formidable enemy, musters up his forces, and puts himself in a posture of defence, to save his country from impending ruin. We should be more alarmed than that prince. His territories were only threatened; our souls are daily attacked, not only by the evils we inherit from nature, but by our mortal enemy the prince of darkness, who not only endeavours to rob us of the kingdom of heaven, but even to subject us to all the punishments an angry God can inflict.

Of all the evils we inherit from nature, our weakness is the greatest. This is so great, that if we sleep over the dangers that surround us, like the indolent and careless virgins—if we prove remiss or negligent of those dangers, we certainly will fall; fall frequently, and at length run headlong to eternal ruin! This lamentable weakness has shown itself in many who attained to eminence in sanctity and perfection. It has eclipsed the brightest stars of virtue, and tumbled the strongest pillars of religion. Holy David, by one weak glance, became a cruel murderer and an adulterer; Solomon, with an understanding more enlightened than any among the children of Adam, had the weakness to offer incense to an idol; and Peter, the prince of the apostles, to deny Christ! Do not those, as well as Tertullian and Origen, and many others, whose splendid rise and unhappy fall are equally remarkable in the annals of time, afford a melancholy proof of the weakness of our nature, and should, at the same time, rouse up our utmost vigilance? But do we not feel this weakness in ourselves? How often have we promised fidelity to our God? How often forgot those promises? A moment's pleasure, a sordid interest, a vain complaisance, or a mere nothing, is sufficient to make us forget our duty to God, and all the precious interests of our immortal souls. Besides, we are all born with a strong tendency to vice, since the early transgression of our first parents; which, although it cannot influence the will so far as to bring it under an absolute necessity of acting amiss, is nevertheless a prodigious inducement to sin, and the most effectual cause of our daily transgressions. This miserable condition of our nature, made St. Paul groan in spirit, "I feel within me a law always acting in opposition to my reason, the law of sin;" a constant inclination to evil, which in spite of all the lights of reason, and the assistance of religion, is hurrying me on perpetually to sin. This tyranny of concupiscence no man is free from. Mortification and a constant warfare with our passions, may indeed subdue, but not root it up. The saints themselves felt and bemoaned it. But what must be in those, who, far from checking, indulge and foment it by frequent crimes! Crimes, that by their magnitude and repetition reduce us to the moral necessity of violating all the laws of God. Our vigilance, I say, becomes the more necessary, because our enemies are constantly, not at our doors, but in our very hearts, mixed and interwoven with our nature; and still we loll on as if we had nothing to apprehend. In the fond hopes of security, we walk every moment in the shades of death. In greater danger than the man condemned to live in an old

tottering ruin, or to a shattered vessel during a violent tempest; because life is not the loss to be deplored, but the immortal soul that must live for ever either in heaven or in hell. There we are invited by the kindness of a merciful God—here we are likely to go by the indulgence of our unhappy nature; there Almighty God stretches out his hand to aid and assist us by his divine grace—but here we are seduced not only by the internal enemies we carry about us, but also by our external enemies, powerful and numerous.

Had we no other difficulty to contend with but our weakness, no other enemies to contend with in our progress towards heaven than our internal ones, this were a comfort; because time and pains may subdue both. But St. Paul tells you, “it is not against flesh and blood we are to wrestle, but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the darkness of this world; against the evil spirits who dwell in the air.” These are they, whose force is equal to their malice, and their cunning superior to both; whom St. Peter represents as so many roaring lions, incessantly ranging the wide world, seeking whom they may devour. These are they, who laid violent hands on that miracle of patience, holy Job, that stripped him at once of his kingdom, of his wealth, of his family, of his possessions, of his friends, and made him stink on a dunghill with corruption and filth. The grace of God in him was superior to all their malice—so let it be in you. The same enemies you have to encounter, the same conflicts to sustain? but more dangerous, because more secret. Full of envy to see us labouring for, and aspiring to the thrones destined for themselves, they employ their fury and rage to defeat our designs. At one time they attack us with open force, by setting our passions all on fire. Another time they disguise their attacks under artful insinuations, that the transgression is of no consequence, only one of those frailties to which the just are daily subject; because they know that one transgression leads to a second, a second to a third, and so on, until they fasten you in iniquity. Sometimes these spirits of darkness will transform themselves into angels of light, by inspiring sublime thoughts of uncommon and extraordinary devotion, in order to seduce you into shameful illusions. This is our situation, and these our enemies, so long as we live in the flesh, which made holy Job call “the life of man a continual warfare.” A war the more doubtful, as being carried on against potent invisible enemies; the more laborious, as every victory we gain is a conquest made by, and against ourselves; a war wherein we may conquer to-day, and be conquered to-morrow.

Notwithstanding those dangers, we find, to the great shame of Christianity, very many who, by ignorant or designing teachers, are lulled asleep and worked up into a false confidence, by far more fatal than the most violent hurricanes, that they will attain the haven of eternal happiness where storms never blow, and where the cries of misery are never heard; but St. Paul, although filled with the Spirit of God, dares not say so, "although I am not conscious of any fault, yet in this I am not justified." And he charges all Christians, "to work out their salvation with fear and trembling." And they are the orders of Christ Jesus, "watch;" for behold the angels—they were driven headlong bound in fiery chains into the flaming gulph. We indeed should entertain through the merits of Christ a confident hope of eternal life—but a hope grounded on holy fear, a fear accompanied by vigilance.

The obligation of vigilance is of a two-fold nature; first—to resist and conquer the dangers that are inseparable from our respective states; and secondly—to guard against those dangers that are not connected with our duty. Christ warns you not to expose yourself to any danger, but what arises from your duty; "he that loveth danger, shall perish therein." Now, it is loving the danger to seek it, or allow yourselves to be drawn into it, without necessity or reason, merely to gratify a vain curiosity, indulge a friend, or chime with the reproved ways of the world. What follows? Perdition by their rashness—the loss of God's grace here, and of their souls hereafter. For without God's grace, you cannot escape the dangers that everywhere surround you; "without me you can do nothing;" and this grace he has not promised to presumptuous rashness. He grants it only for his own glory, or the good of our souls. When men rush headlong into danger, without any defence but their own weakness, dismal, indeed, are the affects that follow! You see those effects daily. Here is the young libertine formed suddenly by an unhappy intercourse with those who never speak but to revile God, his holy religion, his ministers, or make virtue a laughing stock. There the fallen female, who, by novel reading, stores her mind with fantastic ideas, and sets morality adrift. Here, again, is that drunkard, ruined and forlorn, abandoned by the very wretches who made him so, because he neglected that vigilance to avoid their company—to avoid that house where he always surely met those apostles of vice. Take warning by those examples. Look before you, look behind you: be discreet; foresee danger, and avoid it. Almighty God will not preserve the rash man, or the sinner, from burning amidst flames. It is not in

your power to avoid all dangers; because some necessarily spring from the frame and constitution of our nature, the evil example of those we live with, the very show and figure of the world daily solicit us to sin. Almighty God permits this, not to bring about or to be instrumental to our ruin, "for he tempts no man," but as St. Chrysostom observes, to try our faith, to exercise our virtue, and increase our merit. Seeing, therefore, that we must encounter danger, how are we to act? To submit through fear? No: to yield when attacked? No: but to encounter, to resist, to surmount. How? By the grace of God; for "Almighty God will not only not suffer you to be tempted beyond your strength, but will with the temptation produce in you an increase of strength, that you may be able to bear it." St. Paul says so; and he further says, that Christ our blessed Lord was tempted in the desert, "for in that he himself hath suffered and was tempted, he is able to succour those who are tempted." This should inspire us with the most undaunted courage to reflect that we fight under the banners of Christ Jesus. He is our general, our leader, our king. He leads, he combats for and with us, he supports us in the engagement, and, if we prove faithful, he will infallibly crown us with success. Notwithstanding this powerful succour, it is a melancholy but true reflection, that by far the greater part of mankind, even among Christians, make no resistance to temptation. They yield because they are tempted. Why not resist? Why not struggle and summon up your forces? Why not banish the dangerous idea, or the more dangerous image from your minds soon as perceived? Why did you not quit the place, the company, where your mortal enemy, temptation, lay lurking? Why not call on your Saviour, like David, "Hasten unto my aid, O Lord! fly unto my succour?" There are some temptations, it must be owned, too strong and violent to be overcome, but by a special grace from heaven. Divines say this grace is never wanting. It is always either given or offered. Hence Christ Jesus desires you not only to "watch," but also to "pray." Watch to prevent the danger; pray when it is impending. But if you take none of those precautions, if you neither struggle with the danger, nor avoid the occasion, nor apply to God, is it surprising you should fall as often as you do? Your weakness is great, but the power of Christ Jesus is greater. Have recourse to this power. Fear not the attacks of the evil spirit. Since the sufferings and passion of Christ he is bound up in chains, St. Austin says, lest he should give too great a scope to his malice. He can indeed tempt, but he cannot overcome. Like a furious dog, he can bark and

rage—keep at a distance and you are safe. He cannot hurt you. “Be vigilant,” St. Peter desires you. If you are not, you will fall, from the corruption of your own hearts, which wilfully seeks the occasion of your ruin and dwells criminally therein. Hell is wide open before you every moment of your lives. One negligent step may ingulph you in all its horrors. Be vigilant. But as you must stand exposed to certain dangers, from the weakness of your nature, from the number and power of your enemies, from the troubles and difficulties of the world, put on the armour of faith, as St. Paul recommends; that is to say, you must bear up against them with constancy, with resolution, and with courage, so as never to suffer yourselves to be driven from the paths of virtue, or to violate the laws of your God. In this great conflict Almighty God will aid you here by his grace, and crown you in heaven by his holy love, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

As the Scribes and Pharisees observed a great deal of severity in their outward conduct, and a very strict adherence to the ceremonies of the law, the people in general entertained a very high opinion of their virtue, and looked upon them as men of great sanctity and godliness. But Christ Jesus, who knew the hearts of men, took particular pains upon every occasion in unmasking the hypocrisy of those Scribes and Pharisees, and letting the world know what they really were—the vile counterfeits of true, sincere, and unaffected piety. As they courted the external and vain applause of mankind in all their actions, they only studied to appear virtuous, and not to be so in fact; so that they always fell short of that true justice, which has its principle in the heart, and manifests itself by a faithful observance of the law: which true and unfeigned justice is absolutely necessary for the kingdom of heaven.

For this reason our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, said unto the Jews, “Unless your justice surpass that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven.” As nothing but true justice, or the execution of the laws of God, can lead to eternal happiness, it is plain there was something wanting for that purpose more than the justice of the Pharisees, which consisted barely in externals and deceitful appearances. How many are there in the world whose virtue doth not surpass that of the Pharisees! How many content

themselves with the bark of religion, without ever inquiring into the substance or spirit of the law ! To be deemed honest and irreprehensible in the world is all they aim at ; and they even think this a solid foundation for eternal happiness : but is it possible for them to appear more honest and irreproachable than the Pharisees ? Yet our Saviour declares the virtue of the Pharisees was not a sufficient title for the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then aspires to the kingdom of God, must not be satisfied with a bare show of religion. He must look into, and imbibe the spirit of true justice ; that is, he must resolve within himself to fulfil, not any one particular point of the law, but all the essential obligations of religion ; not only in public, but also in private ; not only in the eyes of men, but likewise in the sight of God : not with a view of gaining the esteem of men, but of pleasing the Almighty God, and thereby meet his eternal reward. This is the true justice that God requires at our hands, which is absolutely necessary for the kingdom of heaven.

“ You have heard,” our Saviour says, “ that it was signified to them of old, thou shalt not kill ; and he that killeth shall be guilty of the judgment. But I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be guilty of the judgment.” By these words Christ Jesus plainly shows the difference between the Mosaic law and the Christian dispensation, and the great perfection of the one beyond the other. In the Old Law it was only forbidden to kill ; but in the New Law, not only the outward action, but likewise the inward desire, or that anger from which the desire of killing proceeds, is likewise prohibited or forbidden ; which argues manifestly a higher degree of virtue and perfection. As there are various kinds or degrees of anger, so there are various degrees of sin or guilt attendant thereon. When the anger is only slender or insignificant, then the sin is likewise so. But when the anger is so great as to hurry a man beyond his reason, and prompt him to wish, or do unto his neighbour any considerable harm, then the sin is likewise great and considerable. This distinction of the different degrees of guilt attendant upon anger, is manifestly grounded on the different expressions of judgment, council, and hell fire, which Christ Jesus makes use of in the Gospel of this day. The judgment was a lower court or tribunal amongst the Jews, which took cognizance of slender faults or insignificant transgressions. Our Saviour, therefore, says, “ If any one be angry with his brother, he shall be guilty of the judgment ;” that is, he shall be guilty of a slight fault—a fault of the same kind with the slender transgressions

which were tried and punished by the court or tribunal of judgment. The council was a high court of judicature amongst the Jews, composed of seventy-two persons, and residing at Jerusalem, which took cognizance of all matters of consequence. Therefore, our Saviour says, "If any one says Raca unto his brother," which word Raca was an injurious and contemptuous expression amongst the Jews, "he shall be guilty of the council;" that is, a fault of consequence, and of the same kind with those that were tried and punished by the council or high court at Jerusalem. "But if any one shall say unto his brother, Thou fool;" that is, from a spirit of great contempt, hatred, or revenge, "he shall be guilty," our Saviour says, "of hell fire, or the Gehenna of fire." This Gehenna was a valley near Jerusalem, sacred to the worship of the idol Moloch, where the blind votaries of this pretended divinity used to burn the children they had sacrificed unto the idol. As a perpetual fire was kept and entertained for this purpose, in the valley of Gehenna, our Saviour frequently makes use of that name to signify the eternal and devouring flames of hell. It was necessary to explain this point, in order to make you understand these words "the Gehenna of fire," which frequently occur in the Gospel. But what we should take greater notice of is, the dreadful consequences that flow from any great or considerable anger; as Christ Jesus declares it is to be punished with no less than hell-fire. Yet how many are there who make no account of this sin! How many are there who give loose to their anger, even upon slight occasions; so as to make no difficulty in their passion, to load their neighbour with injurious invectives, reproaches the most false, or aspersions the most dishonourable! How many are there in their anger who thirst after their brother's blood, and even attempt his life! What can persons of this character expect at the tribunal of God's justice? "They shall be guilty of the Gehenna of fire," our Saviour says; that is they shall be condemned for ever to the devouring flames of hell! I could not help it, one will say, I was in a passion. But your passion, Christians, is no excuse in the sight of God; nay, it is your very passion that makes you guilty in his eyes. You were in a passion—but you should not have been in a passion. The moment you felt your anger arising, you should have checked it, and stifled it within your breast. You should then have quitted the company or the occasion that inflamed your passion, and made it rise to the most extravagant, unbecoming, and uncharitable lengths. Our passions are never ungovernable—they may, indeed, be strong and high, but then the

Almighty gives us grace in proportion to subdue them, and keep them within the bounds of reason and religion. If then, with the assistance of divine grace, we endeavour to curb and repress our anger, we certainly shall overcome it, though the provocation be ever so great. But, instead of curbing and repressing their anger, people generally indulge it, and even take a secret pleasure in exerting it in its highest fury and rage.

Has not this been, Christians, the case with each of ourselves in particular? If so, let us humble ourselves in the presence of the Almighty God, and with compunction beg forgiveness for all the sins we have committed on this head. Let us likewise firmly resolve within ourselves to be more guarded against our passions for the time to come. "Anger," St. James says, "worketh not the justice of God;" and our Saviour says, "Blessed are the meek." By the meek, we are not to understand those that are born with mildness. No: that mildness which is born with many, is a constitutional, not a Christian virtue. By the meek, then, we are to understand those that, from a principle of virtue, moderate their passions, and thereby live in peace with God and man. "Blessed," then, "are the meek," our Saviour says, "for they shall inherit the land," or land of the living, in the good will and affection of all those they live and converse with in this world, and likewise the land of promise—these charming mansions, these delightful pastures of the living God, which is the inheritance the Almighty has promised us in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FROM what we read in the Gospel of this day, we may easily learn, as well as from daily experience, that the infinite bounty of God doth not confine itself to relieving us in our spiritual wants and necessities; but likewise extends to the care and preservation of our lives and bodies. Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, was not content to instruct the multitude that followed him into the desert, and inform them of the ways of salvation: but was also graciously pleased to feed them miraculously in their distress, and when they were perishing for want. Being three days fasting, and at a great distance from any place where they might procure relief, it necessarily followed they must have been weakened, in a very high degree: insomuch that it was to be feared, as Christ observes, they

would perish in the way, were they suffered to depart without food. At this critical period, the ever-wakeful vigilance of Christ our Lord took compassion on them, the Gospel says ; and by a miracle of extraordinary bounty and goodness, namely, multiplying a few loaves and a few fishes, to such a degree as was sufficient to feed the multitude with plenty, and likewise to leave a great quantity remaining !

With what joy, Christians, must that multitude have received so seasonable, so necessary, but so unexpected a relief ? With what gratitude must they have acknowledged a favour which preserved them visibly from death ! How often must they have blessed the divine hand that was pleased to exert and display the infinite power of a God, for their assistance and support ! Then they certainly experienced the full force of these remarkable words of Christ Jesus, " Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be given unto you." Having laid aside all care of the world for several days, in order to follow Christ Jesus, and partake of the heavenly food of his divine instructions, it is plain they sought the kingdom of heaven before all things—before comforts, conveniences, or necessities of life—before their pleasures, avocations, or even the pressing wants of human nature. Before all, their God and his word was their pursuit—wherefore Christ Jesus, on his part, was not wanting to reward their generous and holy positions, by relieving and feeding them miraculously in the desert.

This act of Divine Providence is really wonderful in the highest degree. But how many acts of equal bounty and goodness are we not daily witnesses to, without taking the least notice of them ! Is it not, in fact, a greater expression of the infinite goodness of God, to feed all mankind for a continued succession of ages, than to relieve a certain number of men, in their distress, for a few hours ? And is not this what the Almighty has done from the beginning of the world ? Is not this what he daily does, and will certainly do to the end of time ? But because those lively expressions of the bounty of God are grown so common, they are not noticed, much less gratefully acknowledged by the greater part of mankind. We receive the continued favours of God, which fall thick around us, like drops in a shower, without ever reflecting on the hand that bestowed them ; and enjoy the gifts, without so much as thinking on the great and holy ONE from whom they proceed.

I beg leave to ask, is this insensibility conformable to the spirit of religion ? Does it even correspond with the worldly

maxims of gratitude and reason? A great share of the spirit of religion consists in thanksgiving to God for his gifts—those of nature, as well as those of grace. This principle of thanksgiving, or gratitude, is clearly exemplified in the nine lepers, whom our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, had restored to their health, as is related in the Gospel; and after that, one of them went about, giving glory to God and publishing aloud the favour he had received: Soon after our Saviour met him, and asked, “if ten had not been cured; what then became of the other nine? or was there no more than one single person found, and even he a Samaritan, to give glory unto God, and acknowledging so signal a favour?” Do not these words visibly imply a severe reproach to the men that had received the favours of heaven, and took no pains to acknowledge them?

But how justly, Christians, could the like reproach be made unto ourselves? Do we not daily receive the most valuable blessings of heaven, even in the gifts of nature, our daily food and support, without ever testifying our gratitude to God, for these continual and uninterrupted marks of his bounty and goodness? At least for the time to come, let us make it a point of religion, in our morning and evening prayer, to recollect the gifts of God—those of grace and nature, and offer up our thanks for them through Christ our Lord.

The misfortune with the greater part of Christians, doth not barely consist in overlooking the daily gifts of God, but likewise in abusing them by intemperance and excess. But what must men of this character expect at the tribunal of God? “Woe be unto you,” our Saviour says, “who are filled, because you shall be hungry;” that is, because you shall be for ever deprived of the joys and glory of the kingdom of heaven. And again St. Paul declares in the fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians, that “all those who pursue drunkenness, feastings and revellings, shall never obtain the kingdom of God.” As the Almighty God is essentially guided by infinite wisdom in all his actions, it is plain he cannot intend the gifts of nature, but in a wise and rational light; for the support of life, and not for the gratification of the sensual appetites; for a rational and moderate pleasure, not for criminal and intemperate enjoyment. But is it thus the gifts of nature, which Providence bestows upon us, are employed? Are they never made use of, but to answer the purposes of reason, and in a manner conformable to the intentions of Divine Providence? Alas! Christians, how many are there who seek no other happiness than that of eating and drinking, and eating and drinking to excess! How many, that would

readily give up and forfeit all pretensions to eternal happiness, could they but enjoy sensual pleasures without end! How many, in fine, "who make a god of their belly," as St. Paul says, and by the excesses they run into sink themselves below the very level of the beasts of the field! For even the beasts of the field, from an inward instinct, are content with what is sufficient for the support of nature, whereas thousands of men, endowed with reason, and informed by the principles of Christianity, are daily seen to debase their bodies and minds by the most shameful and excessive intemperance.

Intemperance of any kind, either in eating or drinking, is a breach of the law; first, of the law of nature, or that inward law, which the light of reason alone points out to the mind; and second, of the positive law of Christ. The breach of either law, by any considerable intemperance, makes us guilty of a mortal sin. It is pretty rare, indeed, that people commit any considerable excess in point of eating, although instances of the kind are not wanting; but in point of drinking it is too common. However, they are both equally forbidden by the law; for Christ Jesus says, in the twenty-first chapter of St. Luke, "Look well to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness; and that the day of the Lord on a sudden surprise you." Be pleased to observe, our Saviour does not say, lest your hearts be overcharged with drunkenness alone, but with surfeiting and drunkenness; which words plainly imply an excess of either kind. Now, Christians, the law of temperance and sobriety, obliges us in every situation and circumstance of life. Nor is it ever lawful to transgress it for any consideration whatsoever; either out of friendship, complaisance, a view to interest, the laws of hospitality, or the mistaken honour of the world. And yet how many are there who think themselves excusable for running into excess merely because they entertain their friends; or because they may be censured by the world for doing otherwise! But let them consider, it is not by the laws of the world they are to be judged, but by the laws of Christ. If, therefore, we transgress the laws of Christ in complaisance to the world, we certainly will be condemned at the tribunal of Christ, let the world think or say what they will.

What, then, have we to do, Christians? To partake of the gifts of God, as the multitude did in the desert, with sobriety and thanksgiving. With sobriety, by avoiding every excess; and with thanksgiving, by sanctifying our very food. For even these natural actions are susceptible, in the principles of religion, of a certain degree of sanctity and godliness.

“Food,” St. Paul says, (1st Tim. chap. 4), “is sanctioned by the word of God and prayer :” and again in the tenth chapter of his 1st epistle to the Corinthians—“Whether you eat or drink, or do anything else, do all things for the glory of God.” It is, therefore, Christians, in our power to make even the actions of eating and drinking meritorious in the sight of God : 1st—by avoiding every excess from a principle of religion : 2nd—by offering up those actions to God, in union with the merits of Christ ; 3rd—by performing them, not to gratify our palates, or any sensual inclination, but to preserve life, and thereby enable us to serve and glorify the Lord for a longer space of time upon earth. By practising upon every occasion of this kind, some act of self-denial ; such as refusing ourselves something very pleasing to the taste, in compliance with these words of Christ, “If any one will come after me, let him deny himself.” “Blessed are those that hunger,” our Saviour says ; that is, those that deprive themselves of every unlawful pleasure ; who live with sobriety and self-denial ; “for they shall be filled,” by the inward consolations of the Spirit of God in this life, and in the next, by the pure and eternal joys of the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

It was not enough for our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, to inform us of the ways of heaven ; he was likewise pleased to point out, and to caution us against the many dangers we daily stand exposed to with regard to salvation. Now one of the greatest dangers in the world is error, or the adoption of principles, or the following of rules, different from what Christ Jesus, the eternal and unerring wisdom of God, hath laid down in the Gospel. Wherefore our Saviour says, “Take heed of false prophets,” meaning the authors and abettors of false doctrines ; “for although they come to you in the clothing of sheep, they are inwardly ravenous wolves ;” although they wear the face of innocence, sanctity and godliness ;—although they affect the purest and warmest zeal for the glory of God, and the good of souls ; yet in the bottom they are no more than “rapacious wolves,” that are bent upon our entire ruin and destruction.

“Take heed,” therefore, “of false prophets.” But how shall we distinguish those dangerous, pernicious, and destructive monsters ? “You shall know them,” our Saviour says, “by their works.” As there can be no true virtue or zeal, but what

is built upon, and conformable to, the laws and maxims of Christ Jesus, it is plain that whoever deviates from those laws and maxims of Christ Jesus, can have no share of any true virtue or zeal. And this is visibly the case with all false prophets: for they never fail to rise up against the authority which Christ Jesus hath established upon earth, to instruct, govern, and conduct the faithful in the ways of heaven. They never fail likewise to teach new doctrines and prescribe new principles of action and conduct. They are always fond of walking in new and unbeaten tracks, of aiming at, and practising uncommon and extraordinary things. From their works, therefore, it is easy to know them, and consequently to avoid them, according to the direction of Christ Jesus.

But how is it possible, you will say, that people who are extremely honest, extremely charitable, extremely regular in their conduct, should be in the wrong? If it were not possible, Christ Jesus would not have declared it to be so, saying, "They come unto you in the clothing of sheep, but are inwardly ravenous wolves." It even appears from the words of Christ that it cannot be otherwise; for he says, "Can any one gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, nor a bad tree good fruit." If, therefore, the tree be bad in itself, the fruit must likewise partake of the infected nature of the stock; whence it plainly follows, that no action truly virtuous and good can proceed from any man who follows wrong and erroneous principles.

The words of Christ Jesus not only serve to distinguish true from pretended virtues in others, but likewise in ourselves. People are very fond of flattering themselves with the hopes of eternal happiness, because they are Christians and Catholics—because they avoid certain heinous sins and transgressions, which others may be guilty of; such as flagrant injustices, murder, blasphemy, or oppression. But is this, Christians, a sufficient title to the kingdom of heaven? Christ Jesus declares it is not. For he says, "every tree that yieldeth not good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire." What are these good fruits which alone entitle us to the kingdom of heaven?—fulfilling the law of God, and practising the virtues prescribed by the law—justice, temperance, godliness, humility, self-denial, and charity. Without these good works we can have no expectation of eternal happiness: for heaven, Christians, is a reward which is never granted but to such as deserve it. "It is a crown of justice," St. Paul says; that is, a crown due to the works of justice and righteousness alone. If, therefore, Christians, we

have not these works of justice and righteousness to produce, it is plain we can have no pretensions to the crown of justice, which God reserves for the just and good in the kingdom of heaven. And this is the reason why St. Peter says in the first chapter of his second epistle—"Take care to make good your vocation to the faith of Christ by your good works." As if the apostle had said, you have been called, it is true, to the faith of Christ; you have been called likewise to the possession of the kingdom of heaven, because it is the reward Christ Jesus hath promised to those that believe in him and fulfil his law; but then observe, you must make good your vocation by your good works; or, in order to obtain the reward, you must do the good works prescribed by the law. This is likewise the reason why St. James says, in his second chapter, "What will it avail one to say, dear brethren, I have faith, or I profess the faith of Christ, if he have not the works of faith? Will his faith save him? Undoubtedly it will not: for man is justified by works, and not by faith alone."

Are these the principles we have hitherto followed in our actions and conduct? Have we ever taken any pains to convince ourselves of the necessity of bringing forth good fruit? Have we ever considered seriously with ourselves, that "every tree that yieldeth not good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire," the devouring and everlasting fire of hell? "I have chosen you and appointed you," our Saviour says to his disciples in the fifteenth chapter of St. John, "that you go and bear fruit; and that your fruit remain." Like the disciples of the Lord, we have been chosen and appointed by the Almighty God, to bring forth the precious and lasting fruit of justice and righteousness, as we have been called to the faith of Christ—but how far have we complied with this destination of the Almighty God? What good have we done since we attained to the years of discretion? Have we constantly performed the good works prescribed by the law? Alas! Christians, are not all our works, works of iniquity, works of darkness, works of interest and passion—at least works of the most criminal omission or negligence? What, then, will the consequence be, Christians? We read it plainly in the Gospel of this day: "Every tree that yieldeth not good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire," the devouring and everlasting fire of hell. Let us, therefore, Christians, humble ourselves in the presence of the Almighty God: let us look back with sorrow and compunction on our former neglect, and firmly resolve upon a thorough reformation of life for the time to come.

Notwithstanding the positive declarations, the many and

repeated threats of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, a great many lull themselves into a kind of security, from the hopes of repentance. They are conscious, they own, of not fulfilling the law, and of not practising the virtues prescribed by the law; but still they hope, that upon applying to the Almighty God for forgiveness, they certainly will obtain mercy at his hands; that is, the remission of their sins, and an undoubted title to the kingdom of heaven. But Christ Jesus declares the reverse in the Gospel of this day; wherein he says, "It is not everyone that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father;" or, in other words, he that fulfils the law, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Can anything be plainer than these words of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, or more capable of undeceiving all those that expect eternal happiness upon the strength of a "Lord have mercy on me?" Christ Jesus declares that such as build upon this foundation, shall be disappointed and excluded for ever from the kingdom of heaven.

But has not Christ Jesus promised forgiveness to repenting sinners? He has, Christians, but not to repentance that consists only in words: not to repentance that is deferred from day to day, and very often to the last moment of one's life. Not to repentance that proceeds purely from the fear of hell, and not from any real sorrow for having offended Almighty God, who, on account of his infinite greatness and perfections, is supremely worthy the obedience and love of all rational and intellectual creatures. Now, Christians, the repentance that people generally build upon is of this kind. Has not Christ Jesus promised forgiveness to repenting sinners? He has: but at the same time he never promised them either the grace or leisure to repent. He has even declared the contrary in the Gospel; saying, "Ye shall seek me, and you shall not find me; and you shall die in your sins." What, then, have we to do, Christians? "To work out our salvation," as St. Paul directs, "with fear and trembling." To apply seriously to fulfilling the law, and the whole law; that is, not only avoiding certain sins and transgressions, but every material breach of the law. Not only practising any one particular virtue, but all the essential virtues prescribed by the law. Nothing but our good works can secure our eternal happiness. Let us therefore "do good while we have light," as our Saviour directs in the Gospel, "for the night will come,"—the dismal, dreary night of death; that dark and dreadful night, the night of eternal misery and pain—"in which no man can do good." Let us not content ourselves with saying, Lord, Lord; but rather

fulfil the word of God, by keeping faithfully and constantly his commandments ; for Christ Jesus declares, that whoever fulfils the law, shall be admitted to the participation of the joys and glory of the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE parable mentioned in the Gospel of this day, of the rich man, who brought his steward to an account for wasting and dissipating his substance, shows us plainly, Christians, that Almighty God will bring every one to an account for the use he makes of those gifts and graces which Providence thinks proper to bestow upon him in this world. Now, wealth being one of those gifts, which, well used, powerfully helps us on in the ways of life ; but abused (as it generally is), leads us blindfolded into the gloomy ways of eternal death—a due consideration of this subject demands our most serious attention.

Let a person be ever so rich or powerful, he is no more than the steward of the Almighty, and consequently accountable at the tribunal of God for his administration. At the last hour, therefore, the Almighty will certainly address every rich man in the words of the Gospel of this day—"Give an account of thy stewardship." But what account? Where is the man possessed of any considerable share of the wealth of this world, who does not think himself master of disposing of it as he thinks proper? Is it not even rare to find a man who does not dispose of it, in fact, in a most iniquitous and criminal manner, either to gratify his vanity, his ambition, his sensual appetites, or inordinate desires? Is it for this end the Almighty bestows wealth? Undoubtedly it is not ; for being infinitely wise and good, he must have some views worthy of that wisdom and goodness, in giving to some a considerable share of wealth, in preference to thousands of others, who are left in the greatest misery and want : that is, he must certainly intend the rich should use their riches in a manner conformable to the light of reason and the principles of religion, for their own support, and support of their families, the education and establishment of their children, and finally for the relief of the necessitous and poor. To make use of riches in any other shape, or for any other purpose, is plainly deviating from the views of God, and counteracting his wise and bountiful intentions, and, of course, rendering us extremely guilty in his eyes. On this account, Christ Jesus calls riches, "the riches of iniquity;" not because they are bad in themselves ; for if they were, the Almighty

God would never have bestowed them ; and besides, the patriarchs of the Old Law were rich and opulent, yet men of distinguished sanctity and holiness ; but because people render themselves extremely criminal in his eyes by the abuse of the riches that God has bestowed upon them.

It is uncommon, indeed, that people deviate from the views of Providence so far as not to employ their riches for their own support, the support of their families, or the establishment of their children ; but it is too common that they overlook the material point of relieving the poor, although it be one of the most essential obligations of religion : an obligation enforced by a special command, both in the Old and New Law ; in the Old, the Spirit of God says, in the fifteenth chapter of Deuteronomy — “Poor shall not be wanting in the land, therefore, I command thee to open thy hand to thy needy and poor brother ;” in the New, Christ Jesus says, in the twelfth chapter of St. Luke, “Give alms ; provide yourselves with a treasure in heaven that wasteth not, where no thief approacheth, nor moth consumeth.”

Now, that this command is a most essential and indispensable obligation, appears from the sentence of eternal perdition which Jesus Christ is, on the last day, to pronounce against all the reprovèd in general ; wherein no mention is made of any other sin or transgression, than the neglect of charity alone : “Go, ye accursed, into eternal fire ; for I have been hungry, and you gave me not to eat ; thirsty, and you gave me not to drink ; naked, and you have not clothed me ; sick, and in prison, and you have not visited me. Go, therefore, ye accursed, into eternal fire.” From these tremendous words of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, it clearly follows, that alms-giving is a most essential point of the law, since nothing less than a transgression of an essential point of the law could exclude us from the kingdom of heaven, and make us liable to the everlasting torments of hell. Every one, therefore, that God has blessed with any share of the substance of this world, should make it a rule to relieve the poor, as often and as far as his abilities will permit. Let those that have much, give much ; and those that have but little, give even a slender part of that little they possess ; whereby they may merit more in the eyes of God than the rich by their frequent and plentiful contributions ; as appears from the widow’s mite, which was of more consequence before Almighty God, as Christ Jesus assures us, than large sums given by others.

It is not only an obligation upon the faithful in general to relieve the poor, but likewise their interest to do so, from

the many blessings Almighty God has been pleased to annex to, and entail upon, this act of religion. Those blessings are two-fold—temporal and spiritual. The temporal blessings are visibly contained in several places, in the Old and the New Law. In the Old, we find in the twenty-fourth chapter of Proverbs, the Holy Ghost declaring that, “He that giveth unto the poor, shall not want; but he that despiseth his cries, shall be reduced himself to misery and poverty.” And again in the twenty-ninth chapter, “He that takes pity on the poor, sets his money at interest unto the Almighty God, who will give it back again.” Further, Christ Jesus says, by the pen of St. Luke, sixth chapter, “Give, and it shall be given unto you: for with what measure you measure unto others, it shall be measured unto you again.” It must however be acknowledged, that Almighty God is not always pleased to crown our charities with temporal blessings, as the latter may be, and frequently are, prejudicial to our salvation; but what cannot be doubted, Christians, is, that alms are surely and constantly productive of many great spiritual advantages. These spiritual advantages are likewise of two sorts, relative to the different states a Christian may be in; a state of sin, or a state of grace. The Holy Ghost declares, that “as water quenches fire, so do alms resist sin:” and the great apostle assures us, that “charity covereth a multitude of sins.” Not by remitting sin directly, for this is reserved to the power of the sacraments alone; but by moving the Almighty God to pity, and inducing him to grant us the grace to repent, and thereby obtain the forgiveness of all our sins. From a knowledge of its powerful effects, the prophet Daniel advised the wicked king of Babylon, Nabuchodonosor, who had carried his iniquities to the highest pitch, to “redeem his sins by alms.”

But when do the power and influence of alms appear strongest, with regard to sinners? At the close of life, Christians, when all the vanities and pride of life glide away in smoke—when our good or bad actions alone remain to attend us to the dread tribunal of God’s justice, where we must all appear to receive an irrevocable sentence. At that dreadful hour, I say, the sinner will find alms a powerful support, perhaps the only resource to rescue him from the gates of hell, and obtain mercy in the presence of his God. “Happy is the man,” says the royal prophet, “who takes notice of the indigent and poor, for the Lord will deliver him.” When? “In the evil day,” when he will be threatened with eternal misery and pain. Besides, Christ Jesus exhorts us, in the

Gospel of this day, to “make friends to ourselves of the mammon of iniquity, that when we shall fail, they may receive us into the eternal mansion.” From whence it clearly follows, that the greatest hopes a sinner can entertain, at the last hour, are grounded on his alms and charities.

With regard to the just likewise, nothing is more useful or profitable than alms. For first—they essentially help to atone for all their past sins and offences, even as to the temporal punishment due to them. Secondly—They obtain new and powerful graces and aids from God, to resist sin, and fulfil his holy laws. Thirdly—They add greatly to the glory and happiness reserved for them in the kingdom of heaven: for Christ Jesus declares, “that even a glass of cold water given in his name, shall not want its reward.” What extraordinary advantages are those, Christians, and how worthy our attention! Should they not prevail upon every individual to be charitable to the poor upon every occasion, as far as circumstances will permit. Let every one give, as Christ Jesus directs, and give in the spirit of religion, for the sake of Christ, to satisfy the justice of God, to obtain mercy at his hands, or an increase of rewards in the life to come. Let every one, I say, give in this manner, “and it shall be given unto him,” as the Lord God declares; that is, the grace of God in this life, and eternal happiness in the next. Amen.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

WHAT could have been the meaning, Christians, that Christ Jesus, who bore his own sufferings with the greatest resolution imaginable, should have wept at the sight of Jerusalem? A certain regard and tenderness for that city, and a sentiment of pity for the many calamities that were in a short time to befall it; for, as Christ Jesus was the Son of David, according to the flesh, he must have had a particular regard for the Jews, as being the descendants of Abraham, to whom the promises were made, and whom the Almighty God had often assured that he would bless his posterity for ever; that he would look upon his descendants as his own people; that he would take them under his special protection; that he would make them powerful and great; and finally, that the Messiah should be born of his race. As he knew, therefore, in spirit, the evils that were in a short time to fall upon his brethren, he cried out with a transport of grief at the sight of the unfortunate Jerusalem, “Hadst thou but known, and even in this thy day,

the things which pertain to thy peace, but are now hidden from thine eyes."

This is a broken sentence, and the natural effusion of uncommon grief. But the meaning is, hadst thou but known, even in this thy day, the things which pertain to thy peace and felicity, namely—acknowledging Christ Jesus as the true Messiah, the Son of God and Redeemer of mankind; hadst thou but known these things, and the heavy misfortunes which are soon to befall thee, thou wouldst certainly weep along with me. "For the day shall shortly come, when thine enemies shall encompass thee with a trench, enclose and straiten thee on every side, then beat thee to the ground, so as not to leave a stone upon a stone." This was a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, which was literally fulfilled in about thirty-seven years afterwards, by the Emperor of Rome, who besieged, took, and demolished it, after beating the Jews in several battles, reduced its temple (the pride and glory of Jerusalem), tumbled its buildings and its walls into one huge heap of ruins. These were the evils which our Saviour foresaw in spirit would soon come upon Jerusalem, which moved him to tears from a sentiment of compassion for that unfortunate city, and all its most unfortunate inhabitants. But what was the cause of these great and unspeakable evils? Christ Jesus points it out in the Gospel of this day, wherein he declares that the Jews were to be treated with all that severity on account of their perverseness; because they did not know, nor would they know, the time of the visitation of the Lord; that is, the time in which Christ Jesus, the Messiah or Redeemer promised to their forefathers, vouchsafed to visit and make himself known unto them.

What Christ Jesus said publicly of Jerusalem upon this occasion, is only an image, the holy fathers say, of what the Almighty says inwardly unto every sinner, by the inspirations of his Holy Spirit or grace, during his prevarication or obstinacy in sin. For every grace granted a sinner in this situation is a visit from the Lord. The time of receiving this grace is the time of the heavenly visitation. By inward inspiration the Spirit of God saith unto every sinner, "Hadst thou but known the things that pertain to thy peace;" that is, the excessive bounty and goodness of God, who is thus inviting thee to repentance, and the great and valuable blessings that must follow thy returning unto the Lord, thou certainly wouldst obey the voice of Heaven, and forsake thy wicked ways. Hadst thou likewise known the severe punishments that are reserved for thine obstinacy and perverseness, thou

certainly wouldst weep, and bemoan with tears thy miserable and dreadful fate. It cannot be doubted, Christians, but the Almighty does pursue the sinner in his prevarication, and by his holy grace invite him to repentance. For he says in the first chapter of Proverbs, "I have called you, and you have refused to answer my call;" and again, "I stand at the door and strike;" that is, I stand at the door of a sinner's heart and seek for admittance. But if a sinner should constantly refuse to answer the Almighty's call and deny him admittance into his heart, what must the consequence be? Undoubtedly the Almighty, grown weary of seeking for him, will at length withdraw his holy grace in punishment of his obstinacy and perverseness; and in the end give him up a victim to his justice, by assigning him over to the everlasting torments of hell! "We have done all we could," the Angel says in the Old Law, "to reclaim Babylon from all its dissoluteness, but it would not be reclaimed; let us, therefore, forsake it, and abandon it to its own misfortunes." And in the book of Proverbs, first chapter, "I called and you refused—I will laugh in your destruction, when sudden calamity shall fall on you, and destruction, as a tempest, shall be at hand: when tribulation and distress shall come upon you, then you shall call upon me, and I will not hear."

Thus it was the Almighty dealt with the Jews, who were given up a prey to their enemies, for their infidelity, although they were the children of the promise, the chosen, and distinguished people of God. And this will likewise be the case with all sinners who obstinately persist in their sinful ways, in opposition to the grace of God, and the voice of Heaven, which is continually inviting them to repentance. But let us seriously reflect, Christians, may it not be our case, in particular? We are all conscious of having sinned—frequently sinned, grievously sinned. Many of us, perhaps, are conscious to ourselves, of living daily in a state of sin even now, although the Almighty God is daily pursuing them in their disobedience, calling and inviting them back by his holy grace to repentance. For this end he makes them frequently hear the voice of his ministers—for this end he fills their hearts with remorse for the sins they commit—for this end he awakens all their fears, by representing to their minds, from time to time, all the dreadful evils of his severe and inflexible judgments—and for this end am I this day sent to call you back, O you strayed little ones of the house of God—you sinners, whoever you are, "though your sins be red as scarlet," come, forsake your sins, "and you shall become white as snow;" come, "and see how

sweet the Lord is: come, for the Lord God has his arms extended to receive, to embrace you as a son!

What impressions do those strong and continual graces make upon our minds? Do they wean us from sin, and convert us unto the Lord? After the prodigious multitude of graces we have been favoured with by Almighty God, since we attained the use of reason; after the many aids we have already received, and continue daily to receive in the Church of Christ; frequent instructions, participation of the sacraments, the benefit of the sacrifice, continual prayer and good example; after all these aids, I say, what situation are we in, in the sight of God? Are we not as far removed from the kingdom of heaven, perhaps farther, than those that never heard of the all-saving name of Christ? Have not the treasures of heaven been continually lavished upon us to no purpose, and without any fruit to our souls? How guilty must we not appear in the eyes of God, and what severe punishments must we not expect for thus constantly abusing his choicest gifts, and his most valuable blessings! There is not any one single grace we receive, in the whole course of our lives, but we must account for at the tribunal of God. He that received five talents was brought to an account for those five, as well as he that received but the one, was brought to an account for that one. And Christ Jesus declares in the Gospel, that "the more one receives, the more he is accountable unto God."

What just reasons have we not, Christians, to fear "a most dreadful expectation of judgment," as St. Paul says, for the many powerful graces we have received, and the ill use we have made of them. "Many shall come from the east and from the west," our Saviour says, "and shall enter the kingdom of heaven; whilst the children of the kingdom shall be cast forth." The children of the kingdom are those that are called to the faith of Christ and consequently called to the kingdom of God; because that is the reward which Christ Jesus hath promised to all those who believe in him and fulfil his holy laws. These children of the kingdom shall be cast forth, and excluded for ever from that heavenly kingdom—Why? On account of their infidelity to the graces they received.

It becomes then of the last consequence to us to be obedient to the voice of heaven, and faithful to the graces we daily receive from Almighty God. "If to-day you hear the voice of the Lord, take care," the royal prophet says, "you harden not your hearts." To be obedient to the voice of

heaven, with regard to sinners, is renouncing quickly their sins and all their sinful ways, and returning sincerely unto the Lord ; with regard to the just, is corresponding with the grace of God in doing good. Let us, therefore, be attentive hereafter to the visitation of the Lord, by complying faithfully with the graces he imparts, whereby we shall certainly obtain the rewards he has promised to his true and faithful servants in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE Gospel this day lays before us a very surprising, at the same time, a very instructive and improving lesson for our consideration. Two men went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee boasted in the sight of God of not being either an extortioner, an adulterer, an unjust dealer, or such as the publican who was along with him ; he besides glorified in fasting twice a week, and giving the tithes of all he possessed. The publican, on the other hand, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven, but standing afar off, with down-cast eyes, he frequently knocked his breast, saying, "O Lord ! be merciful unto me a sinner." What was the consequence ? "The publican returned home justified rather than the Pharisee." The publican obtained pardon and forgiveness from the Almighty hand of God, which the Pharisee did not.

What can be the cause, Christians, of so extraordinary an event ? Undoubtedly the humility of the publican on the one hand, and the pride and presumption of the Pharisee on the other. From this one passage, we may learn of what consequence humility is in the sight of God, and how far it is incumbent on us to acquire and practise so necessary a virtue. In the consideration of this question, the motives that should inspire, and the advantages that flow from humility, present themselves to our view as of singular importance.

The first motive, Christians, is our own littleness and insignificance : For "what is man, that thou," O God ! "lookest on him ?" No more than a vile compound of earth ; "overwhelmed with miseries," as Job calls him, "the offspring of corruption, mother and sister to the worms ;" full of the most shameful weaknesses and passions ; always prone to evil, and extremely averse to everything that is good ; subject to infirmities, sufferings, dissolution, and death. Man is, indeed, endowed with reason, and thereby distinguished from the

brutal and insensible part of the creation ; but is not our very reason our greatest disgrace, by our acting, most commonly, in opposition to the dictates of that reason, and in a manner unworthy the very beasts of the field ! Our life is but a moment—a shadow that passes ; and what we do during the short duration of life, a source of infamy and shame. Notwithstanding all this, people will be so thoughtless, I should have said, so stupid, as to entertain a high opinion of themselves. “Earth and dust thou art,” says the Holy Ghost, “what reason hast thou to pride?” No reason, indeed, Christians ; yet it is the folly of a great many to be continually raising themselves, and depressing others. From their behaviour, one should imagine they were not formed of the same clay with the rest of mankind. If they speak, it is in the most contemptuous terms ; if they act, it is with the highest arrogance and disdain. “Earth and dust,” as they are, “what reason have they to pride?” It may be objected, that whatever the weakness of man may be, he is still endowed with great perfections. Admitting he is, whence are those perfections derived ? Do they not proceed from the hand of God, “from whom,” as the apostle says, “all excellent gifts descend ?” And if so, what room can there be for vanity or ostentation ? “What hast thou,” says St. Paul, “that thou hast not received ?” And if thou hast received all that thou hast, why dost thou glory as if thou received it not ?” The first motive, therefore, that should make us humble in the eyes of God, and in the eyes of man, is our own littleness, misery, and essential dependency ; the second motive is, that Christ Jesus commands us to be humble, and to think little of ourselves.

This command is contained in those words to his disciples, “Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart.” That this is a command, or a precept, of the strictest kind, appears from another passage in the Gospel, wherein we read that our Saviour, after setting a little child in the midst of his disciples, said unto them, “Unless you be converted, and become like unto this little one, you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Here we see, that for want of humility we are certainly to be excluded from the kingdom of God : whence it follows, that humility is one of the essential and necessary virtues of Christianity, and, consequently, a virtue of indispensable obligation. But in what does this virtue consist ? It consists in thinking lowly of ourselves, in the sight of God and in the sight of man ; in not seeking, but rather avoiding all honour and distinction before man ; in not valuing ourselves so much on account of any advantages of

birth, fortune, or merit ; in referring any perfections we may have (for perfections there are, and distinguished perfections, both of soul and body) unto the Almighty God, from whom they are derived : in not undervaluing or despising those that are destitute of the like advantages, but rather paying them the respect which is due to them, as rational creatures, and as Christians, who are made to the image and likewise of God. For as rational creatures and as Christians, they are likewise the children of God, members of Christ, and, by their adoption in Christ, heirs to the kingdom of heaven, which is certainly the greatest dignity that man can attain to. "Let every one, in humility," St. Paul says, "think others superior unto himself." By this means we shall become like unto little ones, as Christ Jesus directs, and also partake of the great advantages of which humility is productive.

"God resisteth the proud," St. James says, "and giveth grace to the humble." What grace?—the grace of conversion, of improvement in virtue and godliness. Of conversion : there is not a more effectual means of moving the Almighty God to pity, and obtaining mercy at his hands, than humility. This is evident from the example of the publican, in the Gospel this day, who, by humbling himself in the lower part of the temple, was justified, whilst the proud Pharisee was rejected and left in his sins. The reason of this is, that as God alone is truly and infinitely great, he cannot bear to see an insignificant creature, a worm of the earth, usurping and arrogating unto himself a share of the honour and glory which are due to him alone. But humility doth quite the reverse : it pays unto God the honour and glory which are his due, and makes us consider ourselves what we really are—nothing in his eyes ; it renders us, therefore, pleasing unto God, and draws down his most valuable gift—conversion. Let us, therefore, make it a point to humble ourselves frequently, in spirit, under the powerful hand of God, as St. Paul directs : to confess in his presence, that honour, power, and dominion are due to him alone : that we are no more than poor, contemptible creatures, full of misery and sin ; that we should have been long since a prey to the devouring flames of hell, had not the Almighty spared us, in his infinite mercy, and given us time to repent. If we would humble ourselves in this manner in the presence of the Lord, we should certainly be justified, like the humble publican, in the sight of God ; that is, we should certainly obtain the grace of forgiveness and conversion, and likewise graces of improvement in virtue and godliness.

Christ Jesus says, in the Gospel, "he that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." How? In grace and merit. This must necessarily be the case, if we consider that the more excellent any act of virtue is, the more meritorious it becomes in the eyes of God. Now humility is undoubtedly a virtue of the most excellent kind, as it is the foundation and perfection of all virtue. The foundation—because, as St. Cyprian observes, it is impossible to rise to the higher degrees, without first passing through the lower; the perfection—because virtue is like a noble edifice, as St. Augustine observes, which, to rise the higher, must have the foundation the more deeply laid. Seeing, therefore, that humility is a virtue of the greatest excellence, it follows that the practice of it must be extremely meritorious, and productive of the greatest blessings from the hands of God. "Whom shall I look upon," saith the Lord, by the pen of Isaiah, "but upon the humble and poor?" And again (Prov. 29) "Glory shall attend the humble in spirit." The royal prophet assures us in the 101st Psalm, that "the Almighty looks down on the prayer of the humble, and doth not despise their prayer." What incitements are these to the practice of humility! Let each individual examine how far he is acquainted with, or has practised this virtue hitherto. Are we not all, for the most part, total strangers to, and unused in the practice of it, though it be one of the most essential obligations of religion? Is it not our chief study to please the world, and solicit its applause? For the time to come, at least, let us make it a rule to humble ourselves every day in spirit, in the presence of the Lord; never to act from a view of vain glory; and to flee, to despise the glory of this world. By these means we shall atone for our past neglect in this particular, and acquire a certain facility in practising this great and necessary virtue. By these means we shall be exalted, as Christ Jesus declares, not to the vain and passing honours of this world, but to a high degree of spiritual merit and godliness, which will infallibly open to us the gates of glory and happiness in the world to come. Amen.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE deaf and dumb man who was miraculously cured by our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, as we read in the Gospel this day, is an image, the holy fathers say, of a sinner, who, by the frequent commission of sin, is grown hard, and, as it were, insensible to his own situation, deaf and dumb to the

monitions and inspirations of the Holy Ghost. Deaf in this situation to the voice of heaven, argues a hardness of a most lamentable nature; and dumb, that he is likewise almost incapable of addressing or making the least application to Almighty God, which is, undoubtedly, the most dreadful situation a Christian can be in. Whilst a man retains some feeling of his misery, some fear of the judgments of God, some apprehensions of hell, there are always some hopes, let his sins be ever so heinous. One moment's reflection inspired and improved by the grace of God; a moving sermon or exhortation; the sudden death of a friend; some unforeseen accident, in a word, may excite him to repentance, induce him to forsake his evil ways, and return unto the Lord his God. But should a man grow hard and insensible, and settle in his sins and iniquities with a certain security of mind, it is plain that nothing most commonly does or can ensue but final impenitence—eternal perdition!

How is it possible to avoid this danger, when people will neither see it, nor fear it, nor take any precautions against it? And what numbers of our brethren are there in this dreadful situation, in the very midst of Christianity! How many are daily walking in the ways of death, who seem as quiet and as contented in their criminal enjoyments as if assured by divine revelation of eternal happiness! Plunged in the shades of death, they have no thoughts but of enjoying the pleasing, deluding, empty joys of this life, which in a moment must end; but end in their everlasting ruin!

Sinners! “you who have eyes and see not, ears and hear not;” you, who have eyes and ears to see and behold everything but what concerns you most; you who have hitherto strayed in the paths of error and vice—Oh! why will you be deaf to the voice of God, who now calls on you, by his unworthy minister? Return, I say, return to the delights prepared for you in the friendship of your God.

Whence proceeds this insensibility on the part of sinners, this folly and madness? From the justice of God, who, in punishment of their obstinacy in sin, abandons them at length, by withdrawing his holy grace, and delivers them a prey to their own natural weakness and corruption.

“Without the grace of God, we cannot so much as think of the things of God,” St. Paul says. Whilst the grace of God resides within us, we never lay aside the thoughts of salvation: for the effects of divine grace upon the soul consist in pious thoughts in the mind and pious emotions in the heart. But if the Almighty should withdraw his grace, it follows we can

have no thought or relish for the things of God. "The earthly man," says St Paul, "has no taste but for the things of the earth." Now, Christians, that the Almighty God does withdraw his grace from sinners, in punishment of their repeated sins and transgressions, is a certain principle of religion, grounded upon many plain and incontestable passages of Holy Writ, as in the cases of the impious kings of Babylon, Nabuchodonosor and Balthazar, and "the wicked man, King Antiochus." In the fifty-first chapter of the prophet Jeremiah, the Angel of the Lord says, "We have endeavoured to save Babylon, but it would not be saved; let us therefore abandon it." Again, the prophet Isaia, "Seek the Lord whilst you can find him; invoke him, whilst he is near you: for the time will come, when you cannot find him; because he will quit you, and not hear your petitions." Besides, we read in the Gospel these dreadful words of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ: "You shall seek me, and you shall not find me; and you shall die in your sins."

From all these passages it plainly appears, that Almighty God frequently abandons the sinner; and, that it is a principle of his eternal wisdom and justice, to leave him to his own weakness and corruption; whereby he necessarily falls into a state of hardness and insensibility. Then, indeed, he truly becomes deaf, and dumb, and blind, and lame. Deaf, in neglecting, despising the calls of heaven; dumb, in not applying for those aids in the Church of God whereby "he may be converted and live;" blind, except in sensual vanities; and lame in the ways that lead to the city of God. And is not this the situation of multitudes of Christians in our days? They not only have frequently offended the Lord—offended him grievously; but continue daily to offend him, in the most heinous and public manner, without the least remorse, or the least fear of the terrible judgments of the Lord. Talk to them of those terrible truths—they are deaf; open wide before them the deep abyss of hell—they are dumb; let them view those flaming floods of fire—they are blind, they will not see them; let them hear the shrieks and groans of the thousand thousands who are locked up for ever in that region of horrors—they hobble away lame and limping, until destruction, like a tiger, grips them. How comes this? Because the Almighty God has withdrawn his holy grace, in consequence of which they are grown hard in their sins and sinful ways!

You are not, however, to imagine, Christians, that the Almighty ever withdraws his grace so far, even from the greatest sinners, as to leave them destitute of all sort of help or

assistance. No ; if this were the case the command would be impossible, and man under an absolute necessity of sinning ; which is a principle not consistent either with the goodness of God or the doctrine of his Church. But what you are to understand by what I have said, is that Almighty God, on account of many heinous transgressions, draws in his hand, and ceases to impart those strong and powerful graces which, well used, would certainly bring about our salvation—graces by which we not only could, but would, in reality, fulfil the law, and thereby attain to eternal happiness ; and is contented with giving such feeble aids and assistance as enable us indeed to see, but which will never enable us to work out our salvation. Graces of this kind do, undoubtedly, produce some faint glimmerings in the mind, not unlike the feeble light which the benighted traveller may receive from the casual appearance of a star ; but clouds of darkness hang over the mind, which hinder it from perceiving its real and eternal interests in their proper light. They may excite some pious emotions in the heart, but so weak and ineffectual, that they always prove useless, and leave us centred in our sins and iniquities.

Now, Christians, let me ask you, can anything be more dreadful than this state of hardness or insensibility, to which the sinner is reduced by his continual transgressions, wherein he neither has feeling of his misery, nor fear of the justice of God, nor desire of returning unto the Lord ? May we not justly account a situation of this kind the very commencement of reprobation or eternal perdition ? But is not this situation, all dreadful as it is, that of a great many amongst us ? Or, although it should not be so, is it not very much to be feared it will soon be so ? It is an undeniable principle of religion, that the grace of God is lessened in proportion to our infidelity : “He that hath not,” our Saviour says, “shall even lose what he hath.” The most slender fault we commit causes a deprivation or diminution of grace ; a great or considerable fault causes a still greater deprivation ; what, then, must follow from repeated sins and transgressions, from a continued chain of iniquities, from a whole life spent in the most flagrant violations of the law ? When this is the case, the Almighty God only waits to see the measure of their iniquities filled, in order to assign them over to the everlasting torments of hell. In the meantime the sinner may lull himself to sleep in the very midst of danger, and on the very brink of destruction ; but this calm is the forerunner of the most dreadful storms, as the punishments of God always fall the heavier the longer they are deferred : “When sinners think themselves most in safety,” as St. Paul

says, "then sudden ruin and destruction rush down upon them."

Let every one of us, therefore, consider seriously with himself, how much cause he has to dread and fear. To judge of our past sins, even from our present course of life, have we not the strongest reasons to apprehend that Almighty God will, in a short time, abandon us, by which means we must fall into a state of hardness and insensibility—the next step to reprobation? The only way to prevent so great a misfortune, is the fear of God: for which reason the royal prophet used frequently to conjure the Lord "to pierce his very flesh with his fear"—the fear of his most dreadful judgments and unappeasable justice. Let, in fine, the fear of the Lord be deeply impressed on our hearts. If at any time you fall, the fear of the Lord will incite you to arise quickly by repentance. The longer you continue in a state of sin, the more the Almighty will withdraw himself from you, until, perhaps, at length, he abandons you for ever. But if the fear of God rules in your hearts, so far as not to suffer you to remain peaceably in a state of sin for any time, then you may hope for mercy in this life, and eternal mercies in the life to come. Amen.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE duty of parents towards their children is a duty of the first magnitude, as it regards God and civil society. If the spirit of Christianity obliges us to do good to all, how much more strict is that obligation towards those to whom nature unites us by the closest ties? And yet people generally forget their strictest obligation, even where the motives are most urgent to fulfil them. This reflection applies particularly to parents, as parents—wherefore, I feel it incumbent to lay before them their obligations, and afterwards the motives for fulfilling them.

The character of a Christian parent is one of the most illustrious the world has ever produced; as thereby he co-operates with God in planting his faith, and rearing up subjects for heaven. But this character applies only where the duties annexed to a parent are discharged. The first duty is instruction. The Spirit of God says, in Deuteronomy, "This is the law I give you. My will is, that it be engraved in your hearts; but, at the same time, that it pass from your hearts upon your lips, to announce it unto your children." There is the obligation, which is laid down in other places also; and

you cannot neglect it without transgressing a material point of the law. In discharging this duty, St. Chrysostom says, parents are the apostles of their children. As the instruction of the world was committed to the apostles, so is the instruction of each growing family, committed to the parents; for which reason St. Paul calls a private Christian family "a domestic Church." Whoever, then, is blest with children, should take special care to "instruct them and bring them up under the yoke of religion from their earliest infancy," as the same Spirit of God says, in Eccles., chap. 7. To instruct them, first—in the end for which they were created, namely—to serve God here, and enjoy him hereafter; and secondly—the means necessary to obtain this end. Those means are, belief in the mysteries of faith, the Most Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, the Commandments of God and his Church, the sacraments of the New Law, and the preparations they require; in a word, whatever God commands in order to salvation, and what he forbids under pain of damnation. Christian parents, tell your tender offspring, tell them frequently, they were brought into life not to become rich and powerful, but poor in spirit, meek, and humble; not to pass their days in pleasures or delights, but to despise its fleeting pleasures and take up the cross—to worship and adore Almighty God, to serve him, by fulfilling his laws, which lead to life everlasting! Tell your little ones, and strike it deep into their tender hearts, that the greatest misfortune that can befall them is to offend Almighty God, by transgressing any one material point of his holy laws; because thereby they forfeit the grace of God, which is more valuable than all the treasures upon earth, and expose themselves to eternal perdition! Tell them, I say, their love for God should make them resist all trials, the loss of fortune, of liberty, of life! Thus the apostolic functions of a parent are discharged, in training up to the love and fear of God those whom they have already brought into existence. Is this the rule that is followed? No; educating their children in the principles of religion is not the rule that is followed by the generality of parents; and I speak to the generality. They instruct them with care in all the ways and vanities of the world; they teach them the rules of dress, the terms and niceties of fashion, a genteel deportment, sprightly turns of conversation; every art, in fine, of pleasing a mortal eye, and gaining the esteem and applause of mankind; but as for the principles of religion, that they never mind—whereby their children live and die destitute of virtue. Can it be otherwise, when the corruption of the world is such, that persons of the

best education and the greatest caution can scarcely preserve themselves pure and untainted? How must it then be with those young persons, introduced into the world before they know what the world is—placed amidst its dangers before they know what danger is? Oh! how pleasing to the vanity of a worldly parent to see her child cut a figure at a public assembly, and draw the attention, perhaps the admiration, of the thoughtless part of mankind! Wait a while, and you shall see this darling child, whom the criminal parent bred up to vanity, and exposed to the infectious air of the world without the safeguard of religious principles, forfeit—shall I say her honour? no; but what is worse—her religion! To prevent the like misfortunes in future, let every parent take special care to impress strongly the love and fear of God upon the hearts of their children, and a fear of the sinful ways of the world. This is your first obligation—the second is example.

Instruction alone may inform the mind, and teach children what to do; but it will never stir them up to action. Enemies by nature to all restraint, they never will apply to the practices of religion, if they be not, as it were, led by the hand, and excited by example. If, therefore, example be omitted, though the instruction be complete, the work is unfinished. It is raising with one hand, and destroying with the other. But when example is joined to instruction, it never fails to influence the mind and strongly affect the senses, at an age which is led more by custom or example, than by reason or reflection. Docility, vivacity, curiosity, a certain desire of imitation, are discernible in children, which naturally lead them on to action. What they see frequently done, they frequently do; what they frequently do, becomes easy and familiar; what is easy and familiar, passes into a habit; and what passes into a habit, becomes a second nature. Thus children, by instruction and example, are made solidly and lastingly virtuous; whence it follows, that example must necessarily be one of the most indispensable duties of a parent: for as parents are, according to St. Chrysostom, the associates of Christ in the salvation of their children, it follows they are in conscience bound to employ the most effectual means to compass that end, and consequently the very powerful and effectual means of example. Every Christian parent should therefore follow up his instructions by examples of virtue in his own conduct; examples of godliness, by praying with them at stated hours; going with them to the most holy sacrament on certain days, and assisting daily, if possible, along with them at the sacrifice of the New Law; examples of humility, by

thinking and speaking lowly of themselves, and treating inferiors with condescension; examples of charity, speaking always well of their neighbour, except in things criminal in their nature; examples of self-denial, by refraining constantly from all excess, and observing punctually in their presence the fasts and other penitential works commanded by the Church. Instead of acting thus, parents are the first to lay before their children the most pernicious examples: examples of impiety, by cursing, swearing, and blaspheming in their presence; examples of immodesty, by talking before them, either in words of double meaning, or of subjects "that should never be mentioned," as St. Paul says; examples of pride, by enlarging continually in their own praise, and setting themselves above the rest of mankind; examples of detraction, by eternally speaking ill of their neighbours, exaggerating their faults, or blackening their virtuous actions; examples of immortification, by committing frequent excesses, and paying no regard to the days of abstinence or penance prescribed by the Church of God. Now, let me ask, what impressions must examples of this kind make upon the soft and flexible minds of children? Undoubtedly the worst impressions: for how often do we hear mere infants blaspheme the awful and venerable name of God, before they know how to invoke it! talking nakedly of the greatest obscenities, before they can have any notion of modesty! repeating the numerous train of vices, before they are capable of distinguishing any one single virtue! Whence proceeds this early depravity? From your example, O unhappy parents! for which you shall account at the dreadful tribunal of God's justice. What does king David say? Listen to it, Christians, and to what follows: the subject is momentous, and demands your most serious attention. He tells you, the Israelites, after falling into idolatry, were so blind as to sacrifice their sons and daughters to devils. Their false and cruel piety could bear to see the blood of their innocent babes flowing before their idols. You do more. They only sacrificed the body: you destroy both body and soul, by sacrificing your little ones, from their very infancy, to the infernal spirits—the spirit of vanity, the spirit of pride, the spirit of ambition, the spirit of idleness, the spirit of ungodliness and folly. Was it for this end that Almighty God blessed you with children? Was it to sacrifice their souls and bodies, by your wickedness and your folly, to the everlasting torments of hell? This is generally the consequence, where parents neglect to improve and edify their children by virtuous examples. This should rouse all parents to bend their thoughts upon discharging their duty towards

their children, according to the rules and maxims of religion. "You are my joy," says St. Paul to his new converts, "you are my joy, my glory, and my crown;" because they were the rich and precious fruits of his apostolic labours, the glorious spoils he had taken from the enemies of Christ, and the eternal monuments he was to raise to the name and honour of Christ Jesus, in his heavenly kingdom. The same may justly be applied by those Christian parents who teach and instruct their children by word and example: "You are my joy, my glory, and my crown;" you I have educated from your infancy in the love and fear of God; you I have instructed in the necessary principles of religion; you I have led and, as it were, conducted by the hand to the practice of every virtue. The day will come, and shortly come, when I shall feel the inexpressible consolation of presenting you at the throne of God, and delivering you up, as so many glorious prizes, into the hands of your Redeemer, to bless and glorify his holy name during the unbounded length of eternity. To aim at this is your duty. Let us briefly consider the motives for discharging this duty.

The first motive is the glory of God. To what purpose has God from the beginning ordained a constant and uninterrupted succession of men? Is it to stock the earth with people? Those who judge from "the wisdom of the flesh," as St. Paul says, may think so; but religion points out a nobler end—to complete the number of the elect: as the Spirit of God says, "Man was created for the glory of God." As man is the parent of his own immediate offspring, so Almighty God is the universal parent of all; and children are no more, as St. Chrysostom says, than valuable and sacred pledges lodged by Providence in the hands of parents, to call them back at a proper time; whence it follows, that the chief care of all parents should be, to preserve, improve, and cultivate those sacred pledges, in order to give them up when called for, in the full perfection he requires. Otherwise parents do not discharge their trust; and instead of true and faithful servants, they give up an impious race, who wage continual war with Almighty God in this world, and will for ever blaspheme his holy name in the next. As the salvation of your children is a necessary consequence of a virtuous education, so their temporal interests are materially connected therewith, as they derive from thence a steady principle of honesty and true honour, which must necessarily recommend them to public esteem in every situation. From a virtuous education, a nation is blessed with just and munificent princes, faithful and uncorrupt ministers, brave and undaunted warriors, vigi-

lant and impartial magistrates, honest and loyal subjects. But taking the subject in a religious view, as it is connected with our salvation, which is the first object, I beg your attention for a few minutes longer.

Now, Christians, the connection our education has with salvation is so very great, that the one depends most commonly on the other. I have said most commonly, to prevent any objection that might rise in your minds from some extraordinary intervention of Providence. The foundation must be laid in infancy, by inculcating strongly on the mind the wholesome principles of religion. Then the mind is free from prejudice, untainted with error, unbiassed by passion, susceptible, like wax, of every impression; it follows, that early impressions of the love and fear of God, the necessity and advantages of fulfilling his holy laws, must obtain a sufficient influence over all the succeeding actions of life. It may, it does, indeed, happen sometimes, that the most Christian and virtuous education is lost amidst the violence of passion and the corrupted ways of life. The fire of youth, solicitation, example, power and opportunity of unlawful gratification, frequently bear down the most virtuous principles; but early lessons of virtue often revive, and bear down, in turn, all the aberrations of thoughtless levity or youthful folly. When the storms of passion and the fire of youth are allayed, the early-planted seeds of virtue will shoot up, and bear forth, in holy reflections and pious resolutions, a rich harvest of piety in their future lives. But where a Christian education is wanting, you seldom behold a continuance of virtuous actions, nor a reformation from evil ones. How can you expect virtue where the principles of virtue were never sown? "Whatever a man sows," St. Paul says, "that he will reap." If, therefore, a parent neglects sowing the early seeds of virtue, what expectation can arise of seeing the children bring forth the inestimable fruits of justice? The heart of man is a fruitful soil—fruitful from the depravity of human nature, in brambles and briars, in vice and error, unless early cultivated by a virtuous education. "Such as walk according to their own ways," the corrupted ways of rude and unpolished nature, "in their early and youthful days, will not recede from thence, even in the very last stage of life, the decadence of age." Seeing, therefore, that a virtuous life is generally the consequence of a virtuous education, you clearly behold how strong the motive that should induce every parent to give his children this virtuous education, whereon their temporal and eternal welfare so essentially depend. Parents need no incite-

ment to love their children—this is the first call of nature : but let them show their love, by loving them in Christ ; loving them so as to procure the eternal happiness of their souls and bodies. The only way of doing this is, to rear them up in the love and fear of God. Look over the whole catalogue of human woes ; look farther, look into hell ; the damned shall tell you, and all the wretches on earth shall tell you, their calamities arose from—what ? the want of a virtuous education. But observe, for it deserves great observation, those cruel, neglectful, un-Christian parents, will share in the eternal perdition of their children, and increase the torments of hell by mutual rage, mutual invectives, mutual maledictions. “ O cursed parents ! ” will they say, “ you have been the only cause of our eternal destruction. Nature made you our parents, but you became our assassins ; the Almighty charged you with the care of our salvation, but you have led us on in the ways of damnation ; by your means we might have been in possession of the kingdom of heaven, but by your means we are now in the furnaces of hell, and shall remain there for ever and ever ! ”

If therefore, Christians, you have any zeal for the everlasting happiness of your children, any fear of their eternal misery, any desire of partaking of the spoils of heaven, any apprehensions of sharing in their perdition, watch carefully over their tender years ; instruct them in the ways of heaven from their infancy ; inform their youthful minds of all the necessary principles of religion ; inspire their tender and flexible hearts with the love and fear of God ; see that they know and perform the duty of Christians ; teach them, by your example, what to do, what to avoid ; deter them continually from evil : incite them continually to good. By this means you will love them in, for, and with Christ Jesus ; you will deliver them from hell, and lead them and yourselves to the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ALTHOUGH our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, could have instantly cured the ten lepers, mentioned in the Gospel of this day, yet we see, Christians, he was pleased to send them to the priests before he would cure them, in order to show us, as the holy fathers say, the necessity we are under of applying to the ministers of Christ, in order to be cured of the leprosy of sin. As it was the business of the priests

of the Old Law to examine and judge whether a leper was perfectly cured, before he could be restored to public society, or suffered to mix and converse with the rest of the faithful ; so it is the business of the priests of the New Law, or the ministers of Christ, to examine into the inward state or dispositions of a sinner, before he can be restored to the grace of God ; and after finding him in the proper dispositions, to cure him, in fact, of the leprosy of the soul, by granting and imparting the forgiveness of his sins. The power of remitting sin is in the ministers of the New Law alone, as Christ Jesus hath vested this power in his apostles, saying unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost ; whose sins ye remit, they shall be remitted unto them ; and whose sins ye retain, they shall be retained." Although it be unquestionable that the ministers of Christ have a power of remitting sin, yet this power cannot be exerted, nor has it the least effect, without certain dispositions on the part of the sinner. The conditions are contrition, confession, and satisfaction.

Contrition is an inward, supernatural, universal, and supreme sorrow for having offended the Almighty, by violating his holy laws, attended with a firm and effectual resolution of never more offending him, for any consideration whatsoever. This sorrow must, first, be inward ; that is, sincerely lodged in the soul ; for there is a sorrow barely apparent, barely consisting in words, and this is not a proper nor sufficient disposition for the sacrament. For the Holy Ghost says unto all sinners who mean to repent and return to the Lord, "Convert ye unto the Lord with your whole heart ;" and again, "Tear your hearts" with sorrow, "and not your garments ;" that is, let your sorrow be real and sincere, and not confined to outward signs or expressions. Secondly, this sorrow must be supernatural ; that is, it must proceed from the Spirit of God, or a motive of religion, such as, the offence given Almighty God, the ingratitude and injustice of violating his holy laws, and exposing ourselves to eternal perdition. For if our sorrow were grounded upon the shame or infamy attendant upon sin, the misfortunes that may flow from it in the eyes of the world, or any other human motive, it were not supernatural sorrow ; it were only human concern, and consequently no sufficient preparation for the sacrament. It must, thirdly, be universal in extent, and embrace all mortal sins without exception ; for if we should retain a wilful and criminal affection to any one mortal sin, or any one creature in particular, or practice, or principle, which are sinful in themselves, our conversion to God could not be entire, and therefore we should still remain

sinner in the eyes of the Lord. Penitential sorrow must fourthly, be supreme ; it must exceed any sorrow we may have for any temporal loss or misfortune whatsoever. For as the good sin deprives us of, is the greatest that can be imagined—eternal happiness, so the evil it brings on us is the greatest of all evils—eternal perdition, it clearly follows, the sorrow for sin should be supremely great—greater than all the concerns of this life. This sorrow must, in fine, be attended with a firm and effectual purpose of amendment—a firm, sincere, and effectual resolution of never committing any one mortal sin, for any consideration whatsoever. It is impossible for any one to be truly concerned for his sins, if he is not fully resolved to avoid them evermore. It is likewise impossible that our concern for having sinned be supremely great, if we be not sincerely disposed to sacrifice our dearest interests, our fortunes, and our very lives, rather than offend Almighty God again.

The sorrow we are bound to have or conceive for our sins, is of two sorts ; the one perfect. the other imperfect. Perfect sorrow is called contrition by divines, and proceeds purely from the love of God : so that whoever has a perfect sorrow for his sins is concerned for having offended God, purely for his own sake ; because he is infinitely great and good, infinitely amiable and perfect, without any regard to eternal rewards, or eternal punishments. This high perfection of sorrow, is not necessary for the sacrament. It even justifies the sinner, or effaces our sin before we receive the sacrament ; though it always leaves an obligation of having recourse to the sacrament at a proper time. This it is necessary for you to know, Christians, because you may be placed in such circumstances as may make it impossible for you to confess. In cases of this nature, by producing an act of perfect sorrow or contrition, you can obtain the forgiveness of all your sins. That sorrow which is imperfect is called attrition by divines, and is grounded not purely on the love of God, but on an inferior motive of religion—the fear of eternal punishments, or the loss and deprivation of eternal happiness. This sorrow, when attended with an effectual desire of fulfilling all justice, and consequently with a beginning of the love of God, is sufficient for the sacrament.

These are, Christians, the essential qualifications of that sorrow which is requisite for the sacrament. If our sorrow be of this kind ; that is, if it be internal, supernatural, universal, supremely great, and attended with a firm and effectual resolution of never more offending the Almighty God, for any consideration whatsoever, we have the first essential preparation for the sacrament. But if any one of the above mentioned qualifications be

wanting, we do not receive the benefit of the sacrament, but rather commit a sacrilege ; this is the most heinous sin we can be guilty of in the eyes of God, by going to the sacrament without the dispositions it requires. What now must we think of the preparation of the greater part of the Christians of our days? Is their sorrow sincere and not barely confined to words? Does it proceed from the Spirit of God? Is it grounded on a pure motive of religion? Does it extend to all sins and transgressions whatsoever? Are they sincerely and firmly resolved to sacrifice their fortunes and their lives, rather than transgress any one material point of the law? On the contrary, are they not plainly and visibly determined to follow the same principles, the same ways, the same practices they did before, criminal as they are in the sight of the Lord?

The second disposition for the sacrament is confession, or a declaration of our sins to a lawful priest. For, as the spiritual power vested in the ministers of Christ authorises them not only to remit, but likewise to retain our sins; for the proper discharge of their ministry it is necessary for them to know when to retain and when to remit, which they can never do without a proper declaration or information from the sinner. This confession or declaration must be sincere and entire; that is, we must confess all the mortal sins we are guilty of, their different kinds and aggravations; for should we omit declaring any one mortal sin, either through fear, shame, or neglect, we commit a sacrilege. But suppose one forgot a mortal sin, what is the consequence? If the sin be forgotten, for want of a due examination of conscience, the forgetting it is criminal in itself, consequently a mortal sin, and a sacrilege besides. Suppose likewise one should omit accusing himself of many things, because he does not scruple them—if these things be really sinful, he is guilty of a sacrilege every time he goes to the sacrament. Every man is not a judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of every action—this is the business of the doctors of the law, whom Christ Jesus hath appointed in his Church to expound the law. If, therefore, any one refuses following their decisions, and set up his own private opinions in opposition to theirs, he is certainly guilty and culpable in the eyes of the Lord.

It is not our sins alone, and the number of our sins, we are obliged to confess, but likewise their different kinds and aggravations. For instance, it is a sin to steal anything in general; but it is a sacrilege to steal anything consecrated to the worship of God, or belonging to his Church. Therefore, in a case of this kind, it is not enough to say you

are guilty of stealing, but it is necessary to add, you stole something belonging to the Church, because this circumstance alters the nature of the sin. It is, likewise, a sin to steal from any one in general; but to steal even a small sum from a poor body, whose entire dependence is thereon, is a particular aggravation of the sin, which must be specified in confession.

The third disposition for the sacrament is satisfaction or penance. For although the eternal punishments due to our sins are remitted, by virtue of the sacrament, yet there are some temporal punishments we are bound to undergo, in reparation of the injuries we had offered unto God; and this is the reason why the ministers of Christ impose, and are bound to impose upon all sinners, a penance proportionable to their sins. There is, however, this difference between this part of the sacrament and those others, that omitting the penance given in the sacrament, doth not annul it, or render it sacrilegious, as any defect in the others does. The omission of the penance is, indeed, a mortal sin, but doth not destroy the virtue of the sacrament. But if any one should give himself the custom of neglecting his penance, it is plain he had not the other essential dispositions, which must have rendered all his confessions null and sacrilegious.

From all that I have said, Christians, on this head, what are we now to conclude? First, to be extremely thankful to God for having left us so powerful a remedy in his Church as the sacrament of confession. Secondly, to convince ourselves that it is not confessing our sins, but confessing them with the proper dispositions, that justifies us in the sight of God. And thirdly, to do all that lies in our power to obtain these necessary dispositions, as often as we approach the sacrament. If we do this, Christians, we shall be made partakers of the great and inestimable blessings that are derived from this sacrament—the grace of God in this life, and eternal happiness in the next. Amen.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

It is impossible to serve two masters—and Christ Jesus, our blessed Lord and Redeemer, has said so in the Gospel this day; because their respective interests are incompatible with each other, and what is pleasing to one must necessarily be displeasing to the other. It is impossible to serve God and mammon—God and the world; because the laws and maxims

of God are in direct opposition to the laws and maxims of the world. For what is it that God chiefly and principally requires from every Christian? "To seek the kingdom of heaven before all things." But what the world directs is, to seek the riches, the pleasures and honours of this life, even before the kingdom of God. What God requires, as laid down in St. Paul, is, "that we use this world as if we used it not, and possess all things, as if we possessed them not," by keeping our hearts continually disengaged: what the world prescribes is, that we entertain a strong and inviolable attachment to the frail and perishable possessions of this world. What God requires of us is, that we forgive the greatest injuries, and do good unto those that do evil unto us; but the world requires, that we return the slightest injuries, and pursue every affront we receive, with the utmost fury and revenge. What the Lord requires is, that those who mean to become first in the grace of God, become last in the eyes of man, by an humble and Christian deportment; but what the world requires is, that we constantly aspire and place ourselves, if possible, in the highest stations, although it were by means of the vilest oppression and injustice, or though unpossessed of talents or qualifications. In a word, Christians, there is not any one situation of life wherein the laws and maxims of the world do not evidently clash with the laws and maxims of Christ Jesus; and from this continual opposition, it is plain that it is impossible to serve two masters—God and the world, as Christ Jesus declares in the Gospel of this day.

From this impossibility of serving God and the world, what should a Christian conclude? Undoubtedly to serve God and renounce the world: for all the advantages of this world can never make us eternally happy. On the contrary, they are the greatest obstacles to our eternal happiness: whereas serving God and renouncing this world, and its fleeting, fading, perishable pleasures, lead infallibly to everlasting happiness. Instead of drawing this just inference, people in general conclude quite the reverse; and because they find it impossible to serve God and the world, they entirely lay aside the service of God, which alone leads to eternal life, and give themselves up entirely to the world, which infallibly leads to everlasting sorrow. "What will it avail a man," says Christ, "to gain the whole world, if he should lose his soul? Or what is it that can make the least compensation for the loss of his soul?" Suppose a man upon his deathbed, who had lived many years in the world, with all the success he could wish for, who by his care and industry had amassed a large fortune, which

entitled him to all the pleasures and distinctions of life—suppose, I say, a man of this character upon his deathbed, what will his sentiments be at that last and dreadful hour with regard to this world and the world to come? Upon the point of seeing the world vanish before him, with all its riches, pleasures and distinctions—upon the point of appearing before the supreme Master of heaven and earth, the most dreadful Judge of the living and the dead, to give an account of all the actions of this life—how must he be affected with regard to this world? He certainly would forfeit all the empires upon earth, were they at his disposal, in a situation of this kind, in order to prolong his life for a few years to serve God alone. Then he will conceive how monstrous a folly it is, to give up every title to the kingdom of heaven, for the frail and short-lived riches and advantages of this world. Then he will conceive how truly wise they were whom he thought fools—those who despised the world to serve Almighty God—those who preferred retirement, prayer, sobriety, mortification, and the practice of good works in general, to all the glaring, false, and superficial enjoyments of life.

And why do not we, Christians, assume the same sentiments at present? Impossible as it is to serve two masters—God and the world, why don't we at present declare for the service of God—why? Because, you say, it is impossible for one engaged in the world to give himself up to the service of God. How was it possible for David to do so, even upon the throne? He had undoubtedly more business, more important occupations than any one of us can pretend to. He was a great and powerful king, charged with the care of a whole nation; taken up in time of war with the management and conduct of armies, and in peace with the laborious occupation of administering justice unto the public; yet he could find time enough to adore and worship the Almighty God, even seven times a day, as he declares himself in his psalms. Many other kings and princes have done the like, even in later days: and if others do not follow their virtuous example, it is not from want of ability or opportunity, but because it is not pleasing to them to do so, because they suffer themselves to be so blinded with the dazzling show and appearance of this world, that they have not even time to think of Almighty God.

But is it this world that created us? Is it this world that redeemed us from the slavery of sin, and tyranny of hell?—is it this world that sanctified us, and raised us to the sublime condition of children of God? Is it this world that promised

to crown our fidelity with eternal happiness—the glory of the kingdom of heaven? No, Christian, no. These great and inestimable blessings are derived from God alone. What then, Christians, what can influence such excessive attachment as we show for this world? What has it, or can it bestow, worthy our attachment? All that the world bestows, are troubles, anxieties, disappointments; at most a few empty and transitory pleasures, that must end in wild despair and eternal perdition. Are these sufficient motives to outweigh the great principles of religion that should prevail upon us to despise the world and serve God alone? From him alone we received all that we are, all that we possess; and it is he alone that can make us eternally happy or eternally miserable in the life to come.

Again, you may say, is it not incumbent on a man engaged in the world to provide for his family and children? Undoubtedly it is, but without prejudice to his soul. His family and children are of great consequence unto him, it is true; but his salvation is, and should appear of greater consequence in his eyes. Let them, therefore, be provided for, but without that anxiety and solicitude which manifestly absorb all his thoughts and all his time, and make him frequently unmindful of his duty to God, and the eternal concerns of his soul. Let God and his soul be his first and chief concern; let every other lawful object be taken next into consideration. What can be more reasonable or more necessary than to provide for the necessities of life? Yet we read in the Gospel of this day, that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, forbids us to be over anxious even on this head: “Be not solicitous,” says he, “for your life, what to eat; nor for your body, what to be clothed with. Behold the fowls of the air; they sow not, neither do they reap; yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they labour not; yet not even Solomon in all his glory, was clothed like unto one of them. Now if God in this manner feeds the birds of the air, and clothes in this manner the grass, or flowers of the field, how much more will he feed and clothe you, O you of little faith, who are much more valuable than the birds of the air, or the flowers of the field! Seek, therefore, first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things will be given you besides.”

From this whole passage, Christians, two things appear evident; the first, that there is an anxiety for the world which is criminal in the eyes of God, inasmuch as Christ Jesus forbids it: and the second, that Christ Jesus has

promised to provide for those that seek the kingdom of God before all things. He may not indeed grant them what may be pleasing to, or deemed necessary for their vanity, ambition, or extravagance; but he certainly will grant them what is sufficient, proper, and consistent with their salvation. But when is our attachment to the world criminal. 1st—It is always criminal, when our application to the concerns of this life, or the advantages of the world, is so great as to make us overlook any essential duty of religion, the love and worship due to the Almighty God, and the charity and benevolence due to our neighbour. 2nd—It is always criminal, when to purchase, increase, or preserve any interest or advantage of this world, we are disposed to transgress, or actually do transgress, any one material point of the law, or commit any one mortal sin; because that in cases of this nature, it is plain, that the love of the world, and not the love of God, rules and presides in the heart.

To conclude, let us convince ourselves of two essential points with regard to salvation; 1st—that it is impossible to serve God and the world; 2nd—that in order to serve God, we must renounce the world in affection; that is, disengage our hearts from the world, so as never to value its riches, its pleasures or its distinctions in any manner inconsistent with the law of God. If we love the world, we cannot love God above all things; and if we do not love God above all things, we cannot fulfil his law; for the love of God above all things is the first and greatest precept of the law; and if we do not fulfil the law we can have no pretension to the kingdom of heaven. Let us therefore determine henceforward to love the Lord our God, and him alone. By doing so, we shall not only secure what may be necessary for this life, as Christ Jesus assures us, but likewise what is of infinitely more consequence—what is capable of making ample amends for any necessity we may labour under in this world—the joys and glory of the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

WHAT was it that moved to pity and compassion our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, at the sight of the funeral procession, mentioned in the Gospel of this day? Was it barely the excessive grief of a disconsolate mother and widow, bewailing the loss of an only son? No, Christians: a consideration of this kind were unworthy the attention, unworthy the com-

miseration of Christ Jesus. What seemed an object of pity to him, was the imperfection he discovered in the grief and sorrow of this afflicted parent : too great an attachment to the person of an only son ; a visible want of submission to the wise-disposing decrees of Providence ; and likewise a want of faith, which made her consider death purely in a natural light, without any regard to futurity or the life to come. This is the only thing that could make that widow and parent appear worthy of compassion in the eyes of Christ Jesus. But are not the same imperfections discernible in the greater part of the Christians of our days ? How few are there who look upon death in the light of religion, either with regard to themselves or others ! The weakness and blindness of man are, undoubtedly, great upon every occasion ; but they never appear more so than in this particular, that is, with regard to death. The very idea of it is enough to frighten us. It is with reluctance we can think of it, nor can we speak of it but with concern. Death, indeed, is dreadful—but to whom ? To sinners, who place their hearts and affections on this world, and make no difficulty to transgress the Divine laws upon every occasion, to procure or enjoy the pleasures or advantages of this life. To persons of this character death must certainly be terrifying in the highest degree, because it must be unto them the ending of all the happiness of this world, and the beginning of their eternal misery. But unto the just and the good—unto those who never placed their hearts or affections on this world, but always levelled their endeavours at the kingdom of God, death affords abundant matter of inward consolation and comfort ; as it is to them a passage to a better life, and the commencement of everlasting happiness. It becomes, therefore, incumbent on us, Christians, to consider and reflect, seriously and frequently, on the situation of a sinner at the hour of his death, and compare it with that of a just man, and draw from thence such conclusions as may tend to the reformation of our lives and our improvement in virtue.

The consideration of death has been always looked upon by the holy fathers and doctors of the Church, the divines and masters of a spiritual life, as the most effectual method of weaning our hearts from this world, and bending all our thoughts upon heavenly things. The frequent consideration of this subject we shall find, by experience, to be productive of the most happy effects.

The situation, then, of a sinner, at the hour of death, is undoubtedly, Christians, the most shocking and terrifying that ever was : for at that hour all things occur to awaken

his fears for the past, to agitate and terrify him for the present, and to fill his soul with the liveliest apprehensions for the future.

Nothing can be more dreadful to a dying sinner than the past; as therein he sees a long and continued series of sins and iniquities—repeated transgressions of the Divine law, continued omissions of the most essential duties of religion, a constant profanation of the most sacred means of salvation, the sacraments and sacrifice. Therein he will see a number of years, a whole life, spent in wicked ways and worldly pursuits, a total neglect of God and the things of God. Then his conscience will tell him aloud, that his only business upon earth was to honour and serve the Almighty God; and by honouring and serving Almighty God, sanctify his soul; and by sanctifying his soul, prepare the way for eternal happiness; but that, instead of this, he had constantly neglected the service of God, sanctifying his soul, or making the least provision for the life to come. What impression must not a prospect of this kind make upon his mind! Most certainly it will fill his soul with such fear and consternation as to make him cry out, with the sinner mentioned in Holy Writ, “My whole life has been a tissue of errors: I wearied myself in the ways of iniquity; and all that now remains is remorse, death, and a most dreadful expectation of the judgments of the Lord!” Oh! how much better it were to have pursued the end of my creation—the service of my God and my own salvation! Now should I be free from those cruel terrors, and blest with the inward joys that attend a Christian life, and other solid hopes of eternal happiness.

To the terrors that necessarily arise from the consciousness of a whole life being spent contrary to the views of God, and in open violation of his holy laws, let us add the grief and concern the dying sinner must feel upon the point of losing everything that was dear to him in life. For the more enjoyment a man has in the world, the more he must be attached thereunto; and the more he is attached, the more he must be grieved at quitting it. Seeing therefore that a sinner has the greatest attachment to the world, wherein he finds all his comfort and delight, it is plain nothing can equal the concern he must be under upon the point of being deprived of all the pleasures and advantages he enjoyed in the world. Then will he say within his own breast, as the impious King Antiochus did upon a like occasion, “O cruel death, is it thus you separate and tear me away from everything that is pleasing and endearing to mind or sense?” My wife, my family,

my children, my riches, my pleasures, my possessions, my life, my all—I know what I quit, but whither shall I go? I leave this world, which was to me a world of pleasure; but what shall be my fate in the world to come? Is it pleasure I am there to meet with, or eternal woe? If he looks up towards heaven, what does he behold? an angry God, an all-powerful God, ready to avenge upon his guilty head the manifold iniquities he had been guilty of. If he fixes his eyes upon the cross, the awful and comfortable sign of our redemption, what does he perceive? the image of a God made Man, and dying a most painful and ignominious death, for the salvation of mankind—whose sacred name he had constantly blasphemed, whose Divine laws he had trampled on, whose excessive mercies he had constantly abused by his presumption and obstinacy in sin. If he carries his thoughts a little further into eternity, what object does he descry? a gulph flaming with the wrath of God, destined for the eternal abode of all the enemies of God and the guilty transgressors of his laws.

Behold truly, Christians, and conceive, if you can, any situation more dreadful than this of a sinner upon the point of death. But may not even the greatest sinner repent at the last hour? He may indeed; but the proper question is, whether he will or generally does. Whether the repentance of a dying sinner be generally of such a nature as to make it agreeable unto God. Now it is the general opinion of all the doctors of the Church that it is not; that it is even quite the reverse; for true repentance necessarily implies the love of God above all things, and a sincere disposition of sacrificing our dearest interests upon earth—our fortunes and our lives, rather than violate any one point of the law. And is this the spirit of a dying sinner? St. Austin says no: his repentance is grounded on fear alone. He fears to burn, St. Austin says, and not to sin. Were he assured there was no such place as hell, his mind would be quite composed. So that he has no more than the bare appearance of conversion, and, consequently, dies in his sins, in disgrace with God, and the wretched victim of his eternal justice.

The situation of the just man at this last and dreadful hour is very different, Christians, from that of the inveterate sinner. Neither the past, the present, or the time to come, can give him any great anxiety or disquietude of mind. If his memory recalls any transgressions of the Divine laws, they were transgressions owing more to the frailty of human nature than any premeditated malice; transgressions he never erected into

principle, or continued in, but rather detested as soon as committed, deploring them in the bitterness of his heart, and at length effacing them with tears of sorrow in the tribunal of penance. As his heart was never placed in the world, he sees the world depart without struggle or concern. As he always desired the kingdom of God should come, he beholds that kingdom approach with comfort and delight. Frequently he wishes, with St. Paul, to see his exile abridged, his earthly frame dissolved, and his soul at liberty to fly to the enjoyment of his God. Although he fears the judgment of the Lord and his inflexible justice, he hopes still more in his infinite mercies: for he is pleased to observe, that hope is a divine virtue, and a particular gift of God, which he never fails to bestow upon the just at their last hour; because the exercise of this virtue becomes then more necessary than ever. It is, therefore, at the last hour that the Almighty God enlivens the hopes of a just man, and raises all his expectations to heaven, in and through the merits of Christ Jesus; and thereby banishes that fear, that anxiety, that horror, which is unto a dying sinner an anticipation of the everlasting torments of hell.

Thus the just man dies, free from disquiet, full of hope in the merits of Christ Jesus, in peace with himself, in peace with mankind, in peace with his God. "Happy are those," the apostle says, "that die in the Lord." But which of these shall be our own fate? Shall we die the death of the just or the sinner? One thing is certain, that people generally die as they live: those that lead a just and virtuous life, die the death of the virtuous and just; and those that lead a sinful life, die the death of sinners—miserable beyond expression. If, therefore, you mean to die as the just do, you must live as they do; that is, you must die to the world, disengage your hearts from every unlawful pleasure, every unlawful interest or advantage of the world. You must likewise die to your passions, or sinful appetites, and live to God by observing faithfully his holy laws.

If you do this, the Almighty God will raise you up at the last day, not to a mortal or perishable life, as he did the widow's son in the Gospel this day, but to immortal life, a life which is never to have an end, and to be crowned with eternal felicity in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

WE are informed, Christians, by this day's Gospel, that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, having entered the house of a certain prince of the Pharisees, to eat bread, on the sabbath-day, he there met a man ill of the dropsy ; upon which our Saviour asked the Pharisees " was it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day." But they held their peace. Our Saviour then " took hold of the sick man, healed him, and sent him away ; " then addressing the Pharisees, he said, " Which of you, should his ox or his ass fall into a pit, will not presently draw him out on [the sabbath-day ? " Our Saviour knowing perfectly well the malicious intention of the Pharisees, who watched him, and only wanted an opportunity of censuring his conduct, he was resolved to prevent an attempt of the kind, by showing what they themselves would do in a case of necessity, wherein their temporal interests alone were concerned, on the sabbath-day ; whence it was easy to conclude that if they deemed it lawful to withdraw their ox or their ass out of a pit on the sabbath-day, it must be extremely lawful, and no way censurable, to restore a sick man, one of the children of Israel, to health, even on the sabbath-day. However, upon the whole, it appears how strictly observant the Jews were in general of the sabbath-day ; nor was this any way surprising, since the observance of the sabbath was one of the material points of the law, and enforced under the severest penalties. The sabbath is a subject, Christians, of the most weighty consideration, to examine its obligation and the manner of fulfilling it, and afterwards to behold some of its abuses.

" Remember to keep holy the sabbath-day," was one of the commands delivered to Moses by the mouth of God, amidst fire and thunder, upon Mount Sinai ; " all servile work thou shalt not do therein ; " and the punishment inflicted by the law on transgressors of this command, was no less than death. For the Lord says, in the thirty-first chapter of Deuteronomy — " The seventh day shall be holy unto you : it is the sabbath and repose of the Lord : he that shall work thereon shall be put to death." The sabbath was so strictly and religiously observed by the Jews, that it was not lawful even to gather the manna that day in the desert. This sabbath, which was so religiously kept, was instituted in honour and memory of the creation, and, consequently, of all the blessings that are derived from the creation unto mankind : for the Scripture tells us that " the Almighty, after creating the heavens and the earth, and all they contain, during six days, rested on the

seventh day, and sanctified it." It was further instituted as a memorial of the alliance Almighty God had made with his chosen people : for the Lord says, " Let the children of Israel keep the Sabbath, and solemnize it, from generation to generation : it is an everlasting covenant between me and the children of Israel, and a sign that shall last for ever."—Exod. chap. 31. The Sabbath-day, or day of rest, for the word sabbath signifies rest, was kept on Saturday among the Jews ; but amongst us, Christians, it is kept on the following day, or Sunday, from the appointment of the apostles, who thought proper to solemnize this day in preference to the Jewish Sabbath, first—in honour of the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who on that day arose from the dead ; and secondly—in memory and in honour of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, which happened on a Sunday. St. Luke tells us, in the Acts of the Apostles, that the primitive Christians used to meet on the first day after the sabbath to partake of the Holy Eucharist, and assist at the dissertations of St. Paul upon religious subjects ; so that you see, Christians, that the Sunday was solemnized by the apostles and their immediate disciples. Although the sabbath has been transferred in the New Law, yet the obligations are the same as in the Old Law ; that is, we are obliged in the New Law to refrain from all servile work on this day, and keep it holy unto the Lord. This obligation is also grounded on the light of reason, and the very first dictates of the law of nature, which point out to every man, within his own breast, that, as a dependent creature, he is bound to acknowledge, venerate, and adore the supreme power of his Maker, and the many favours he received from his bountiful hand. The light of reason, it is true, doth not point out the time of paying these indispensable duties of religion unto the Almighty God : No : this it leaves undetermined. Wherefore the Almighty was pleased, in the Old Law, to fix and determine a certain time for that purpose : so that the command of keeping holy the sabbath-day is no more than an outward determination of the inward law of nature.

The manner of keeping holy, or sanctifying this day unto the Lord is, first—by refraining from all servile work, " Six days shalt thou labour, and work, and do all that thou hast to do," saith the Lord ; " but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God, thou shalt not do any work therein." Secondly—by consecrating this day, in a most particular manner, to the exercise of religion. What can be more just or reasonable, Christians, than after spending six days in the care

of worldly business and affairs, to employ one day in the week to the service of the Almighty God? For this purpose, the Church of Christ commands all the faithful in general to assist every Sunday at the sacrifice of the altar; because this is the most perfect worship we can pay the Almighty God. Besides, the Church requires, though not so rigorously, that the faithful assist, on the Lord's day, at the public prayers and instructions which are offered up and delivered publicly on this day more than any other of the week, all over the Christian world. Should we omit assisting at the sacrifice of the altar on the Lord's day, we commit a grievous sin; because we not only refuse paying unto the Almighty God the worship and adoration due to him, but likewise disobey a particular command of the Church. Should we also neglect the public prayers and instructions of this day, we deprive ourselves of a great many graces and spiritual blessings: inasmuch as it cannot be questioned, but that the Almighty is more inclined to show mercy unto his people when he sees them assembled in his name, than upon any other less important occasion.

Nevertheless, Christians, can anything be more common, to the eternal shame of Christianity, than to see the Lord's day profaned in the most criminal and sacrilegious manner? How many violate and abuse this sacred day, by servile works and worldly occupations! How many refuse to sanctify it by the commanded works of religion! How many convert it into a day of dissipation—a day of rioting and dissoluteness! Such as behave somewhat like Christians the rest of the week, frequently behave like Pagans, and worse than Pagans, on the Lord's day, by spending it in idleness, drunkenness, and debauchery. And in this particular (I say it, Christians, with the utmost sorrow and confusion) many of our Catholics surpass, in this country, the rest of mankind; as they seem to pass less regard to the Lord's day than any other set of people whatsoever. One should really think they only wish to see the days allotted for labour at an end, to be the more at liberty to insult the Almighty God, by profaning the day he was pleased to appoint most particularly for his own service and worship. Is there hardly a tradesman that does not employ the Lord's day in squandering away, in drunkenness and debauchery, the greater part of what he had earned by his labour the foregoing week? Now, conduct of this kind plainly implies three grievous sins and transgressions: three grievous sins—mind this. The first is a sin of intemperance; the second a sin of injustice towards his wife and children, whom he is in conscience obliged to provide for, but

whom he often deprives, by his dissipation, of their necessary subsistence: the third a sin of impiety towards God, in not sanctifying the day he hath appointed for his own honour and worship. Others that are occupied in business, make no difficulty in buying and selling on the Lord's day, as much as any other day in the week, which is a manifest violation of the sabbath. Even those that seem to possess more of the fear of God than others, are frequently guilty of violating the sabbath, though not in so flagrant a manner; for although they assist in the sacrifice of the altar, it is without a spirit of attention, a spirit of adoration, a spirit of religion; it is with the utmost dissipation and distraction. How criminal must it not be to behave in this manner; and what heavy punishments must it not draw down from heaven upon their guilty heads?

In order, therefore, to reclaim, let every one pay a due regard to the Lord's day, not only by refraining from all servile works, but likewise by employing it in the exercise of religion, the worship of God, deploring the many sins and transgressions of the week, and forming strong and inviolable resolutions of amendment for the time to come. Let every Christian parent see that their children apply particularly, on the Lord's day, to prayer and reading such books of piety as are capable of informing their minds, and improving their morals, in the essential duties of religion. In a word, let every master and mistress see that their servants, and every individual in their care, apply, on the Lord's day, to the worship of God and the sanctification of their souls. By this means, after celebrating upon earth the rest of the Lord, in a spirit of religion, you will certainly be admitted one day into the mansions of eternal rest, along with the blessed in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

As the love of God, Christians, is the very first command or precept of the law, according to the declaration of Christ Jesus, it is a matter of the first consequence to us to know, 1st—how far this divine law is necessary towards salvation; and 2ndly—what it consists in.

It is a settled point of Christian morality, that any man that hath not the love of God, can have no pretensions to the kingdom of heaven. For the kingdom of heaven is a reward which Almighty God has promised, through Christ Jesus, to all those who fulfil his law. Now, as it is the first and greatest

command of the law to love God with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our might, it is plain if any man doth not love God, he falls short in the accomplishment of the law, and consequently can have no right to the reward of eternal happiness. For this reason, the apostle says, "Any man that doth not love God, abideth in death;" that is, he is dead to the grace of God, dead to the rewards of God, dead to all hopes of everlasting happiness, and doomed, in a word, to everlasting death. Nothing, therefore, can be more indispensable towards salvation than the love of God, as appears not only from what St. Paul has said, but more especially from the positive command of Christ Jesus, in the Gospel this day: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole might;" thou shalt love him in preference to, and beyond anything in heaven or on earth—beyond wealth, or power, or pleasure—love him for his own sake alone, on account of his adorable perfections, and on account of the unspeakable blessings he has poured forth on mankind in general, and each one of you in particular. Thus are we obliged to love the Lord, with all the powers of our souls, and all the faculties of our bodies. Miserable, indeed, must be our unhappy nature, to require a precept to love thee, O my God, who art the fountain of love, whose love constitutes the joy of the blessed! But let us examine, Christians, how far we have discharged this duty hitherto. Can we with any truth or sincerity say, that we have hitherto loved the Almighty God, or that we love him even at present above all things? I fear very much there is nothing we have been so deficient in. Instead of loving God as we ought to have done, is it not the world, its advantages, its pleasures, its follies, its vanities, we have loved—and loved to distraction? Can anything be more criminal than to be continually breaking and infringing the first and greatest precept of the law? Anything more unreasonable than to be continually prostituting to vile and perishable creatures the love and affection due to the great God alone? We are all created for no other end than to love and serve the Almighty God, from whom alone we received all that we possess, all that we are. From God alone we can receive grace in this life, and eternal happiness in the next; and yet we have loved everything besides this God. It remains, therefore, Christians, that we humble ourselves in the presence of this Almighty, good, and amiable God; acknowledge our past errors, deplore them in the bitterness of our souls, and begin at last to turn all our affections towards

that Almighty Being, in whom they should have been invariably centred and fixed. Did you but conceive the virtue and excellence of the love of God, you certainly would use all your endeavours to attain it. One act of the love of God above all things is so excellent, divines say, and the doctors of the Church, that it is capable of blotting out the greatest sins, and consequently of reconciling the greatest sinners unto the Lord. This wonderful effect of divine love is grounded on these words of our Saviour: "If any one love me, he shall be loved by my Father, and we will both come and dwell in him." Whoever, therefore, loves God, must be loved by him, and consequently must appear both righteous and agreeable in his eyes, which could not be the case if the love of God did not efface all his sins and transgressions. From a knowledge of these effects, divines and masters of a spiritual life are constantly advising and exhorting the faithful to excite as many acts of the love of God as they possibly can, in the hope that one or other of them may be perfect; for if any one of them should prove perfect, they are infallibly justified thereby.

This love, which thus justifies the greatest sinners in the eyes of God, consists of two parts—the love of preference, and the love of benevolence or complacency.

The love of preference consists in loving God above all things, and preferring him before all things in heaven or earth. For as God is infinitely great and good, he requires that we love him in a manner worthy his infinite greatness and goodness: this we can never do, but by loving him more than the whole world besides. If, therefore, Christians, you truly love God, you must love him, as I have said, beyond all the honours, riches, or pleasures of this life—beyond all his works—beyond life itself; for our Saviour says in the Gospel, "If any one will love father or mother, brother or sister, nay, his very life more than me, he is not worthy to be called my disciple." But when have we an opportunity of testifying this love or preference unto the Almighty God? As often as the observation of his law or commandments comes in question—for our Saviour says in the Gospel, "He that loveth me, is he that keepeth my commandments;" and again, "If any one will love me, he will keep my commandments." Therefore, Christians, keeping the commandments and fulfilling the law, is the distinguishing mark or characteristic of the love of preference we owe unto the Almighty God. If you would fain know whether you possess the love of God required by Christ, or not, see how you behave with regard to the law. For instance, an opportunity offers of vastly increasing your

fortune ; but the means are sinful ; if you love God, above all things, as you are bound to do, you will renounce the prospect of gain, and prefer the fidelity you owe to God to all the advantages of this world. From your situation in life you may frequently fall into company that are disposed to run into excess, or entertain themselves with lewd subjects or obscene discourses ; then if you love God above all things, as you are obliged to do, you will refuse complying with their humour, and prefer the fidelity you owe to God, to the criminal ways and complaisance of this world. A man has injured you severely : it is in your power to revenge yourself upon him in the completest manner ; if you love God above all things, as Christ Jesus directs you to do, you will prefer his love and the fidelity you owe him and his command, to the revenge you have it in your power to obtain. In a word, were your life at stake, and that it were in your power to preserve it, by one single mortal sin, you are obliged, from the love of preference you owe the Almighty God, to lay down your very life, rather than transgress his holy laws. This is what St. Paul signifies, when he “ defies the whole creation to extinguish the love of God within him.” This is what he sets forth, when he assures us, that “ no hardships or sufferings no danger or persecution, nor even death with all its terrors, should ever separate him from the love of Christ.” Where, O where, Christians, are these heroic but necessary sentiments to be found ? Who is the man, whose conduct shows that he has the love of God in his heart ? One thing is most certain in the principles of religion, that any man who has not the love of God in him, that love of preference, which sets the Almighty God and the fidelity due to his laws above all the considerations of this world, has no share in Christ ; but, on the contrary, lives every moment of his life before God in a state of eternal reprobation.

Besides this love of preference, there is another love we are obliged to have for Almighty God, which is a love of benevolence or complacency ; that is, we are obliged not only to love God above all things, but likewise for his own sake, with a pure and disinterested love. The divine law commands and orders us to love God with our whole heart, with our whole soul, with our whole mind. Therefore, as thoughts and affections can reach, dwell upon, and adhere to the infinite perfections of Almighty God, considered purely in themselves, it follows we are obliged to do it in consequence of the law. But when, and how often ? This is one of the nicest] points of our holy religion, the clearing up of which has exercised the

talents of the most learned divines in Europe for upwards of a century. This much at least may be depended on, 1st, that we are obliged in conscience to produce acts of this pure and disinterested love, immediately after our attaining to the use of reason ; 2nd, that we are obliged to produce them frequently in the course of life ; and 3rd, that we are most particularly obliged to produce an act of pure and disinterested love at the hour of our death. It is lawful, it must be owned, to love God on account of the happiness he has prepared for us in the life to come : for a devout soul may serve God, like King David, on an account of the reward, but that is only a secondary motive. If it glances at itself and wishes its own happiness, it wishes still more the glory and the accomplishment of God's holy will. It does not exclude its own interest ; it cannot even exclude it, because it places its happiness in the possession of God, its beloved object ; but it does not establish its principal end in this possession, inasmuch as it renders itself happy. It establishes it in the glory which results from it to God, and in his good pleasure which is everything to it. To conclude, let the obligation dwell strong in your minds, of making frequent and fervent acts of divine love, at least every day, in the morning and at night. It is not necessary they should be long or learned. You may say with King David, "I love you, O my God ! my strength and my refuge." I love you from my heart, not because you can make me happy or miserable, but because you are my God and my All. Or with the great St. Augustine, "Too late I began to love you, O my God ! but now that I know you, I know my obligation, I love you with all my heart, and will love you evermore." If we do, the Lord God will love us, and not only love but show us one day how much he loves us, in the mansions of his immortal kingdom. Amen.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE Scribes, mentioned in this day's Gospel, (St. Matth., ninth chapter) were writers or notaries among the Jews. Of these some were employed in civil matters alone, such as registering marriage contracts, and other public deeds ; others among them were employed in spiritual occupations, such as the care of preserving the holy books or scriptures, and expounding them unto the people. The Scribes as well as the Pharisees, had often been reproached by our Saviour for their hypocrisy, and for merely adhering to the letter and not entering into

the spirit of the laws they expounded. They professed the minutest nicety in their external observances, and affected to be scandalized at the most innocent actions of Jesus Christ. They beheld with pain the success that attended his preaching, and watched every opportunity that seemed favourable to their invidious designs, to slander his reputation, and destroy his credit amongst the people. Every word, every action of his they observed, not to partake of this heavenly doctrine that flowed from all his words and actions, but to catch him at some unwary moment, and take occasion from thence to cry down his mission. Some of the Scribes and Pharisees being present at Capharnaum, when Christ Jesus said to the paralytic, mentioned in the Gospel of this day, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," were greatly scandalized thereat, and secretly constructed these words into blasphemy, as expressing a power in man which belonged solely to God. Wherefore Jesus Christ, to show them that he was both God and Man, and that their most secret thoughts were as perfectly known to him as if they had been declared by word of mouth, suddenly asked them, if it were not as easy for him to tell the paralytic that his sins were forgiven him, as to bid him rise from his bed and walk. And to convince them that he had the power of doing both one and the other, he said to the paralytic: "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." The paralytic rose, and the spectators, full of admiration at the miracle, returned thanks to God, who had given such power to man. It is true indeed that God alone hath power of himself to forgive sins, but Christ Jesus, who is both God and Man, could, and did communicate this power of forgiving sins, in his name and by his authority, to his delegates in the sacred ministry. We have Christ's own words for it, St. John, xx., 23. "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." How great, my brethren, must the astonishment and confusion of the Scribes and Pharisees have been, when they behold the very person they just now accused of blasphemy, curing the sick man of his palsy, and restoring him to the most perfect health. Then they perceived, or might have perceived, that Christ Jesus had an undoubted power of remitting sin, and consequently must have been the Redeemer, promised unto Israel, since he wrought before their eyes the most surprising miracles in confirmation of his divine authority and mission. But those carnal men, led away by the objects of sense, could not discover in the meek and humble Jesus that Messiah whom they expected as a mighty warrior seated on the throne of David. In like manner, Christians, there are some persons, so blinded by

their obstinacy and malice, as not to discern the clearest light of heaven: no evidence will remove their obstinacy; no conviction satisfy their malice. To them we may apply the words of the royal prophet, "They have eyes and see not, ears and hear not." However, the crowd who were looking on, and whose hearts were not influenced, or overruled by any inordinate passion, took immediate notice of the miracle, "and gave glory unto God, who had given such power unto men." Amidst the general acclamations of the crowd, what must have been the sentiments of the sick man himself, who, after being dead in some measure for many years, and confined to a bed of sufferings, destitute of strength, motion, or consolation, was in one single moment restored to life and vigour by Christ Jesus, so as to be able to walk with liberty, and enjoy all the blessings and heartfelt joys of the most confirmed health! In what transports must he have expressed his gratitude to his divine deliverer!

This is the substance of the Gospel of this day—but in the moral resulting from it, the holy fathers and doctors of the Church discover a genuine picture of a person languishing in a state of mortal sin, deprived of the grace and friendship of God. As the palsy not only deprives a man of the use of his limbs, but moreover reduces him to the most miserable state of infirmity and weakness, unable to help himself, or scarce call for help to others, so sin strips us of spiritual health, and reduces us to a situation of all others the most miserable. The conduct of this sick man contains a fine lesson for the imitation of Christians, who lose the grace of God by sin, to apply to Christ Jesus in the sacrament of penance for a cure; but as I mean to treat that important subject more fully hereafter, for the present I shall say but a few words, in pointing your attention to the desire, the fervent, animated, warm desire which this paralytic felt of being restored to health, and of the means employed to attain that end. Totally deprived of all bodily action by his infirmities, he knew and he felt his miseries. Observe here the foundation of his cure, in the knowledge of his complaint. The knowledge of our spiritual infirmities constitutes also the foundation of our cure, and is the first striking inference we are to draw from the Gospel of this day. The second is equally obvious and striking. In vain had the sick man tried all the power of medicine, and all the aid of art. Art and medicine were lost in the magnitude of his complaint; and his cure was reserved for the manifestation of the glory of God, and the divinity of his adorable Son,

Christ Jesus our Lord. Our Saviour returning to Capharnaum, where the sick man lived, the fame of his miracles having gone before him, this sick man, from an ardent desire of health and strong faith in the power and charity of our Lord, caused himself to be brought in his litter or bed to the house where Christ Jesus then was. This desire of a cure forms the second grand point worthy your observation: observe how vehement it must be, and how ingenious in striking out new and unheard of contrivances. He cannot go, and therefore orders himself to be carried, bed and all, to the great Master of life and death. When he arrived at the house, the crowd obstructed all entrance by the door. This disappointment, far from checking his ardour, only suggested new contrivances. At the other end of the house approaches were made to the roof; the roof was uncovered, and the paralytic was hoisted up, and let down into the room before our blessed Saviour's feet. The sick man did not reflect that if he fell, he would lose his life, and perhaps kill others. No; his desires were too vehement for delay, and his faith too strong to behold danger. Those fervent desires, this strong faith, form the next grand object for your example and imitation: let them animate you truly and sincerely, and I promise unto you, on the part of Almighty God, the same benefits the sick man received—immediate and perfect health: "Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house."

What happened in those days at Capharnaum, daily happens among Christians in our days. We become spiritually sick, and disabled from all the functions of spiritual life, as often as we commit any grievous sin. What the palsy is to the body, sin is to the soul; it plants a thorn in the mind, the thorn of conscience, and happy are they who feel its stings, as the paralytic man did his complaints. To feel and know the evil of sin, which of all evils is the greatest, generally leads the way to a deliverance from it, by raising such fervent and effectual desires as I have been just speaking of; for no man can feel the pressure of great weight, or the anguish of great pain, without wishing to be delivered therefrom: nor the want of a great good without desiring the possession thereof. Happy, I say, are all those who pursue and expel the evil of sin which oppresses their souls, with the same fervour they do the sensible evils of this world. But unhappily there are but few who imitate the conduct of the sick man in the Gospel, who feel unhappy and miserable under the pressure of sin, and the loss of God's grace, as he did under the pressure of infirmity and the loss of health. The power of causing that miracle of

grace—the spiritual resurrection from sin to the life of virtue, is always to be found in the Church established by Christ Jesus, which power he specially confirmed unto her on the day of his glorious resurrection. All you, therefore, Christians, who feel oppressed by sin, come and partake of the remedy which the ministers of Christ have deposited in their hands for your benefit. Do not be led astray nor kept back by a fatal insensibility. Remove the veil which the false seductions of the world draws over your sins. Seek the Lord, and return to him whilst he may be found—whilst it is yet day, lest night come on when no man can work. The eternal word of God speaks to you, from the Gospel, and tenderly invites you to ease and happiness, “All you that are weary and oppressed, come to me.” Throw your cares and your burthens on the Lord; throw your sins at his feet, and he will cover them by the drops which fell from the cross. But beware of neglecting this call of his mercy. Beware, lest it might be the last call which Christ Jesus may give you; for great as he is in mercy, equally great is he to execute justice without mercy upon those who reject his tender calls and invitations.

The Church this day invites you all, by the example of the sick man, to apply to Christ Jesus in the tribunal of penance for a cure for all your spiritual infirmities. Sinners oppressed and borne down by their crimes, and not saints, he invites thither, because by them he wishes to show the riches of his mercies. Suffering on a bed of pain, and languishing in a palsy, the sick man is brought to Christ Jesus, and, by one word of his divine power, is restored to health. Let every one, therefore, who labours under a paralytic disorder of the soul, that is, an habitual state of sin, go and present himself before the Lord, who is the divine, all-powerful Physician of the soul. In his hands are life and death. One or other he can dispense and dispose of at will; for he is the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world. Truly he says of himself, “I am the resurrection and the life.” This life he desires to impart; go, therefore, and present yourself frequently before him, with an inward sense of your misery, and sincere sorrow for your sins, with an earnest desire of amendment, and a firm purpose of sinning no more. If you do this, you certainly will perceive within yourselves, by the inward inspirations of divine grace, the pleasing and comfortable word which Christ Jesus said unto the sick man, Arise from the slavery of sin to the liberty of the children of God. Arise from the lethargy and insensibility you were in, and awake to justice, to the spirit and activity of

life. Arise, come forth from the shades of death, and walk hereafter in the full blaze of a godly life, and the shining hopes of eternal happiness in the kingdom of heaven! Amen.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Nothing can be more instructive, Christians, or more improving, than the parable mentioned in the Gospel of this day, as it contains, in reality, an abridgment of religion, the merciful views of God with regard to mankind, the means he employs to compass his designs, the perverseness of man in refusing to comply with his bountiful intentions, and lastly, the dreadful punishments he inflicts on all those who prove disobedient or refractory to his will.

The marriage feast mentioned in the Gospel is a figure, the holy fathers say, of the kingdom of heaven. The being that prepared it is Christ Jesus, the eternal, co-eternal God, by whom and through whom alone, mankind can attain eternal happiness. Those that are called to the marriage feast, all the nations upon the earth, who are invited to the kingdom of heaven, by believing in Christ and fulfilling his holy laws. The servants that were employed in calling them, are the prophets, the apostles—in a word, the ministers of Christ, who are particularly authorised and commissioned to preach the faith of Christ, and publish to the world the eternal happiness which is to be obtained in his name; that is, through the merits of his passion and the observance of his holy laws. Amongst those who were called to the marriage feast, many refused to come; hereby are meant those who refuse believing in Christ, and submitting to his laws; such were the Jews, in the first place, and next all those who, after hearing, receiving, and professing the saving faith of Christ, do not live agreeably thereto. In the room of those who refused to come after being invited, others were substituted—thus the Gentiles have been brought in and called to the faith of Christ, after the Jews were rejected and reprov'd for their obstinacy and malice. Christ Jesus declares, in the Gospel, that “he was particularly sent by his Heavenly Father to those that had gone astray out of the house of Israel.” The Jews were the children of the promise, being the posterity of Abraham, to whom the promises were made, that God would take him and his descendants under his protection, and that the Messiah should be born of his race: the faith was therefore first preached unto them. But this great and inestimable

blessing being rejected by the Jews, it was transferred unto the nations, or Gentiles; so that the call of the nations, or their conversion, was grounded on the reprobation of the Jews. "The Jews," St. Paul says, "were the natural olive tree, and the nations the wild olive. But the wild olive has been grafted on the former," the apostle says, "by a wonderful effect of the bounty and mercy of God;" or, in other words, we have been in reality substituted in the place of those who refused to come to the marriage feast.

The first thing, therefore, Christians, that we should do upon the present occasion is, to consider that each of us in particular has been called, by a particular blessing, to the kingdom of heaven; of which the marriage feast, this day, is a genuine and lively picture. But what return have we made Almighty God for so inestimable a favour? Have we ever mentioned it in the presence of the Lord? ever made it the subject of our praise or thanksgiving? The Almighty God was under no necessity or obligation of enlightening us with the light of Christ, and thereby informing us of the eternal happiness that is reserved in the life to come for all those who believe in Christ and fulfil his holy laws. No. He could have left us, like thousands of others, in darkness, error, and infidelity, to the very last moment of our lives; but "he has been most graciously and most mercifully pleased to transfer us from darkness," St. Peter says, "to the admirable light of the Gospel," which is the greatest of blessings. How much happier is our situation than that of nations born in idolatry, who never heard, at least many of them, of the all-saving name of Christ. From the ignorance they are born in, unacquainted as they are with the light of faith, the way to heaven, and destitute of the many powerful graces which are conferred by the holy sacraments, very slender indeed are their prospects of attaining to life everlasting. Such must have been our condition, if Almighty God, out of his pure mercy, had not granted us the light of faith, even from our infancy. Let us, therefore, "ever bless and magnify the name of the Lord, who has dealt with us more mercifully," as the prophet says, "than with other nations." "Heaven and earth praise ye the Lord; let all the works of the Lord praise the Lord. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me praise his holy name!"

Many of those who were called to the marriage feast, refused to go, on account of their worldly affairs: so amongst those that are called to the kingdom of heaven, there are many that refuse the heavenly call or invitation. For although

they know that heaven is the reward, the great and glorious reward, promised to all those that shall serve the Almighty God and keep his commandments; yet the love of the world is so prevalent in their hearts, as to occupy and absorb all their time, all their thoughts and affections. "One is taken up," the Gospel says, "with farming; another with merchandise," some with one thing, some with another; all are too busy to answer the call of God. Their worldly cares and occupations render them deaf to the divine call and invitation; deaf to the ministers of the Gospel, who, on the part of Christ Jesus, invite you all to the marriage feast—invite you to do and perform what is requisite in order to attain to the kingdom of heaven. But, Christians, can anything be more silly, more stupid, or more criminal, than to prefer the calls of momentary, passing interest, to the voice of heaven; the frail and perishable riches of this world, to the pure, full, and everlasting joys of the kingdom of heaven? The Almighty God invites us, in the Gospel this day, and also by his apostles and pastors, to prefer his pure and lasting joys to the perishable joys of this world. The condition on which they are to be obtained is the observance of his holy laws. He grants us his grace in abundance to enable us to perform this necessary condition, yet there are thousands so blind to their interest as to reject the generous and bountiful offers of Almighty God, and prefer the empty and short-lived enjoyments of this world to all the treasures of the kingdom of heaven. Remember what Christ says, and let it sink deep in your souls: "What will it avail a man to gain the whole world, if he should lose his soul?" the loss and perdition of which must be the inevitable consequence of not answering the divine call—of not doing and fulfilling what God requires at our hands, in order to obtain life everlasting. How was it the great and powerful king, mentioned in this day's Gospel, behaved towards a man who went to the nuptial feast without the nuptial robe? He ordered him to be seized upon by his servants, to have his hands and feet bound, and then to be cast into outer darkness, where there shall be eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth!

Thus it is every one will be treated who presents himself at the tribunal of God without the bright ornament of grace and good works, which alone can entitle him to a seat at the marriage feast—the possession of the kingdom of heaven. Sooner or later we are all to appear in turn before this dread tribunal of God; but in what condition? Shall it be by day or by night? in winter or summer? this year or next? to-day

or to-morrow? Shall it be with or without the nuptial robe? (upon that your eternal lot depends)—in grace or favour with God?—entitled to the joys and glory of heaven, or doomed miserable victims to the everlasting torments of hell? One thing is certain, that nothing but virtue, and justice, and godliness can gain admittance to the kingdom of heaven. “Many are called,” Christ says, “but few are chosen.” We are all called, inasmuch as we have been baptized and instructed in the faith of Christ; but are we of the number of the chosen few? This we cannot know. But we know with the utmost certainty, that it is in the power of every one of you to be of the number of the chosen. How? “By making good your vocation,” as St. Peter says, “to the faith of Christ, by good works.” For none but the chosen are admitted to the kingdom of God; and none are admitted to the kingdom of God but such as fulfil the law; and none but those who fulfil the law are certainly of the number of the chosen.

If, therefore, after being called to the faith of Christ, we fulfil his holy law; that is, if we believe all that he has revealed, and practise all he has enjoined—there is no doubt but we will be of the number of the chosen, and consequently admitted one day to share in that bliss, whereof the marriage feast this day is but a slight figure—the joys and glory of the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GALILEE was a little province contiguous to Judea, which gave our blessed Lord and Redeemer an opportunity of making frequent incursions into it. During one of these incursions, a petty king or nobleman, whose son lay ill at Capharnaum, upon the point of death, applied to our Saviour to go down along with him, and cure his son. Having heard the wonderful things our Saviour had already done in Judea, he doubted not but he could restore his son to life, even in the dying state in which he was; and if he did, he would be satisfied within himself of his divine mission and authority. He was also confident his request would be granted, from the rank and consequence he held in the country, being a petty king. But our Saviour, who paid no respect to persons, nor regarded human distinctions, instead of readily granting his request as he expected, rebuked him, on the contrary, saying, “Ye do not believe, except ye see signs and prodigies.” The nobleman, however, renewed his request with great humility,

calling our Saviour "Lord and Master," and entreating him to go down along with him, before his son would die. On seeing this, our Saviour was pleased to comply in part with his request, by miraculously curing his son; but would not go down along with him, in order to lower the high opinion this king had of his own greatness or distinction, or to cure a secret diffidence he seemed to entertain of the power of Christ. For, by insisting so strenuously our Saviour should go, one would imagine he suspected Christ Jesus could not cure his son, unless he was present. But our Saviour, to show him that his power was not confined to time or place, desired him to go back to his house, assuring him at the same time that his son was alive and would live. The nobleman relied upon his word, and soon learned from his servants that the fever had quitted his son at seven o'clock the foregoing day, which was the very hour he was discoursing about him with Christ Jesus. It is easy to conceive what an impression such agreeable news must have made on the heart of this nobleman. The Gospel tells us, that thereupon he believed in Christ, and his whole family along with him. This was a most happy circumstance indeed, by which he obtained not only the recovery of his son, the delight and comfort of the father, and in all appearance the rising hopes of his family, but likewise the true faith of Christ, which is the ground-work and foundation of eternal happiness. Whatever pleasure he received from the recovery of his son, could only be limited in extent; but believing in Christ could, and in all appearance did make him eternally happy in heaven.

Is there any one, Christians, but would wish most sincerely to have been in the place of this nobleman? But be pleased to observe, that the great blessings which that nobleman received in a miraculous manner, I mean faith in Christ, has been bestowed on each of us at baptism in our infancy. Yet, where is the person that ever reflects upon this inestimable favour with the gratitude and thanksgiving it deserves? How few are there that take any pains to know their faith, or the advantages that attend it? And yet an inquiry into our faith, and a knowledge of the advantages arising from it, are of the last consequence and importance.

Faith is a gift of God, by which we believe all that he has revealed unto his Church, upon the infallible authority of his own word. It is a gift—because no man can have faith from himself, or believe without a particular grace from heaven. "Faith," St. Paul says, "is by hearing." And again, "How will they believe, if what they are to believe be not preached unto

them? You are justified by faith, and this is not of you, but from the grace of God." This grace the Almighty God grants unto some, while he refuses it unto others. For all nations have not as yet been enlightened with the faith of Christ, because some regions are yet supposed to be unexplored. In all known countries, faith has been spread by the preaching of the Gospel, but by the terrible judgments of God removed from some. The Almighty is master of his gifts, and no one has any right to bring him to an account for such distribution as he thinks proper to make of his favours. It is this particular grace, which we receive first in our baptism, that enables us to believe all that God has revealed unto his Church, and to believe it upon the sole authority of his word. Here, then, you have both the object and the motive of our faith. The object of our faith are all the things which God has revealed in the Old and New Law. In the Old Law God spoke with man, and afterwards by Moses and the prophets; in the New Law by the mouth of Christ Jesus himself, and his apostles. What, therefore, we are to believe, is what God has revealed, and this is contained chiefly in the Old and the New Testaments. The motive of our faith, or the reason why we believe those things, is the authority—the infallible word and authority of Christ; or because God, the infallible truth, who, neither can deceive us, or be himself deceived, has revealed the points of our faith. It follows hence, we are to believe the points of our faith with the greatest firmness of mind, without the least doubt or hesitation, because they are grounded on the infallible word of God. "If we believe the testimony of man," St. John says, "how much more should we believe the testimony of God." It follows also, that it must be a great sin, a sin against faith, to disbelieve or even doubt of any one point of Revelation, because that is calling in question the truth and veracity of God who revealed it. Nevertheless, there are to be found those who, for worldly interest and advantage, have denied and will deny their faith; but Christ will deny them before his Father in heaven. There are those that hesitate to believe some of the most material points of our faith, because they cannot comprehend them; such as the Incarnation, the death and sufferings of Christ, the Most Holy Trinity, and others. Could reason comprehend them, they would be no longer mysteries. The question is not whether those mysteries be conceivable or not, but whether God has revealed them? If he has, they must be true; because God can reveal or say nothing but what is true, and essentially true. Now that God has

revealed those things, is manifest from the testimony of all ages ; but especially from the testimony of his unerring and infallible Church, which the Almighty has established upon earth to guide and conduct us in the way to heaven. This is the nature of faith. It is a gift, a most particular gift of God, by which we firmly believe, without hesitation, all that God has revealed to his Church, and that upon the strength of his own word or testimony. The value of this gift will be seen from a consideration of the advantages that attend faith.

So great are the advantages that attend faith, that St. Paul says in his Epistle to the Romans, "We are justified by faith." From this it appears there is no justification, no appearing just and righteous in the eyes of God, without faith. It is faith therefore that opens the gates of heaven, and gives us a title to the kingdom of God : which makes us partakers of the merits of Christ, and entitles us to the rewards he has promised all his faithful servants. "He that believeth and is baptized," says Christ, "shall be saved." On the other hand, says St. Paul, "Without faith it is impossible to please God ;" consequently, such as have not faith can have no title to the kingdom of heaven ; for Christ Jesus says, "He that believeth not shall be damned." But what faith is that which justifies before God, and entitles us to the kingdom of heaven ? Not an idle, inactive, or speculative faith ; not a faith which is confined to believing alone, but a fruitful faith ; a faith attended with good works, "a faith," as St. Paul says, "which operates through charity." This is the faith which justifies the soul, and enlivens all our actions. When you pray, what is it makes your prayer agreeable to God ? Faith in Christ. When you fast or give alms to the poor, it is likewise your faith in Christ that renders acceptable to God both your fasting and alms : so that faith is to good works what life is to the body—the enlivening and animating principle ; and so true is this principle, that all you could do or think of, either by prayer, or fasting, or alms, or even giving up your very life as a sacrifice, can obtain no merit, can avail nothing, unless it proceed from a spirit of faith ; for you will please to observe, that our actions have nothing in themselves agreeable to God. This consideration alone should give us the greatest veneration for our faith, and make us value it, as an immense treasure of spiritual blessing. It should engage us likewise to produce frequently fervent acts of faith, protesting to God that we believe firmly all that he has revealed unto his Church, upon the strength of his own infallible word of testimony. Divines say, we merit more by acts of faith, than by fasting and other

penitential works for years ; because this virtue is so great and excellent in its nature, as it captivates and subjects unto to God the noblest faculty of the soul—understanding, that it raises our actions to the highest degree of merit.

Let us, therefore, Christians, enliven our actions by a spirit of faith, offering them to God through Christ, and in union with the merits of Christ. Divines call this the interior spirit—that spirit which constitutes true and solid virtue. Without this spirit of faith you can have no more than the appearance of Christianity. Many fast and pray ; but how ? or why ? or for what end ? they never inquire. And yet without this spirit of faith in Christ, all is lost. Let us, therefore, henceforward “learn to live by faith,” as St. Paul directs : that is, enliven all our actions with a spirit of faith. For by faith the grace of God will be drawn down on you in this life, and the gates of heaven will be open for you in the next. Amen.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE tendency of the whole Gospel this day is, to make us sensible of the obligation we are under of showing mercy unto others. For this end, our Saviour lays before us the severe punishment inflicted on a merciless servant, who on, receiving mercy, and the greatest mercy from his own master, would show no mercy to his fellow-servant, in an occasion of small consequence ; nor remit a trifling debt, after obtaining a full release of a most considerable debt. This is the parable, or figure ; and the application our Saviour makes of it is this, that our Heavenly Father will treat us in the same manner—will deliver us up to the executioners to be cast into prison, till we pay the last farthing, if we refuse showing mercy and forgiveness unto others. This may appear a very severe injunction, as nothing is more repugnant to our nature than to forgive a grievous injury of any kind. However, there are two considerations which are very capable of reconciling this injunction to our minds. The first is, that God commands us to forgive even the greatest injuries ; and the second, that refusing to forgive is putting the Almighty God under a necessity of showing no forgiveness, no mercy unto ourselves.

The command is laid down in the sixth chapter of St. Luke, where Christ says, “Forgive.” And again, in St. Matthew, “I say unto you, Love your very enemies.” This command subsisted from the foundation of the world ; but by the corruption that gradually crept in among mankind, it was imagined

by the Jews, in our Saviour's time, that it was lawful to hate their enemies, although they were obliged to love their friends. But Christ Jesus made them sensible it was not so originally, and that the exception of enemies was a corruption of the law, introduced by the Pharisees; for which reason he took great pains to revive, and bring back to its primitive and original purity, the law of loving and forgiving our enemies, which was almost abolished, and worn out of the minds and hearts of mankind. Christ had a right to do so: first—as supreme Lord of the creation; second—as showing the example in himself; third—as the promises of forgiving us are grounded on our forgiving the offences of others.

Almighty God, as sovereign Lord of the universe, has a right to lay down for his creatures, the works of his hands, such laws as he thinks proper. Essentially wise, and good as wise, he orders and commands us to forgive our greatest enemies—and the law must be obeyed, otherwise we incur the penalties he has been pleased to denounce against all transgressors of the law—eternal perdition. “How is it possible,” you will say, “to forgive a person who intended, who affected your entire ruin, by detraction, by envy, by secret villany, or open violence?” Were it not possible, Christians, the Almighty God would not have commanded it: he has commanded it, therefore it must be possible. For be pleased to observe, God does not require these great, noble, and difficult sentiments of forgiveness from us, considered barely as men, but as Christians, aided and assisted by the all-powerful grace of God. What we could never pretend to do of ourselves, or from the power of nature alone, becomes not only practicable, but easy, by the strength of grace. Behold St. Stephen praying, at his dying moments, for those who were putting him to death.

Almighty God not only commands, but exemplifies in his own conduct, the obligation of forgiveness. When the insolvent servant, mentioned in this day's Gospel, threw himself upon his knees before his master, begging a little time, and assuring him he would pay to the last farthing, this master, I say, remitted the whole debt. Thus our Heavenly Father acts by mankind in general. How many sins are daily committed against Almighty God, all over the world? what injuries offered unto his holy name? And in what manner does he treat the offenders? does he punish them when they offend, and with the severity their offences deserve? No: our patient God waits, and calls, and invites, by his grace, to repentance; and when they kneel down and entreat—when they are contrite and humble—he forgives them the whole.

Is it not thus he has treated each of us in particular? How often have we offended Almighty God in the violation of his laws; and how often obtained forgiveness! Shall we therefore refuse to comply with these examples of repeated forgiveness, in respect of others? If neither example, nor advice, nor entreaty, will influence you, attend to the words of Christ; "Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee thy whole debt; shouldst not thou, then, forgive thy fellow-servant in like manner?"

In order still more effectually to induce you to forgiveness, Christ Jesus assures us, in the most positive manner, in St. Luke, "Forgive and ye shall be forgiven," not a part, but the whole, without limitation or restriction. Go, therefore, every one of you that harbours any hatred, or ill-will, or anger, or malice against his neighbour; go, I say, kneel down in spirit before Christ, and tell him you offer, in union with his merits, and the sacrifice of the cross, the sacrifice of all your enmities and resentments, all the injuries you have received from others, because he requires it, because you love him, and because, being all sinners, you expect mercy, according to his promise. Do this—do it sincerely from your hearts—and Christ will answer you—"Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee."

On the other hand, if we refuse to forgive, we compel, in some measure, our Saviour to refuse forgiveness unto ourselves; as he declares in the Gospel this day that his Heavenly Father will treat each of us as the master did the merciless servant, unless we forgive our brethren from our hearts. To expect forgiveness, therefore, without forgiving, is expecting that Almighty God will, in our favour, break through a positive declaration he has made. But as he is incapable of doing this, it is plain our unwillingness to forgive must be an eternal, insurmountable obstacle to his mercy and goodness. Until this obstacle be removed, all that you can do towards a reconciliation with God can be of no force or avail. Although you were continually praying in the presence of the Lord, continually performing the greatest austerities of religion, it would avail nothing, until you forgave. Christ Jesus declares, that though you were upon the point of offering up your gift or oblation at the altar, you should quit the very altar, and go to be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. How great an enemy, then, must that man be to himself, and to the interests of his soul, who harbours spleen or hatred, anger or malice against his neighbour! While he means to hurt and prejudice another, it is himself he hurts and prejudices in reality, because his revenge will fall back upon himself. As he will grant no forgiveness, he can expect no

forgiveness will be granted him : for St. James declares, "Judgment without mercy for him who hath not shown mercy unto others."

Moreover, Christians, does not a person of an unforgiving temper put it out of his own power to address the Almighty God in prayer? Is it not one of the chief petitions of the most excellent Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us as we forgive others?" If, therefore, we refuse forgiving the injuries we receive, do we not thereby beseech Almighty God not to forgive ourselves the sins we committed, the injuries he has received at our hands?" "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us ;" as we forgive, do thou forgive us, O Lord ! as we pardon others, do thou pardon us ; if we do not forgive, if we do not pardon from our hearts, all those that have injured us, do not thou, O Lord God ! pardon, but punish us. Such is the plain construction of that prayer, and such is the great misfortune attending an irreconcilable hatred, that it deprives us of any share we might expect in the mercies of God, and consequently destroys all hopes of eternal happiness. You should however, know, that when a grievous injury is offered, it is lawful to sue for a just reparation, such reparation as the laws of justice and equity will allow, because justice is not inconsistent with charity ; but then this reparation must be sued for without malice—not with a view of hurting your neighbour, but barely to do yourselves justice. You should know that when a grievous injury is offered, it is the aggressor's business, and a duty in conscience incumbent on him, to make reparation, and consequently to make the first advances toward such reconciliation—in the meantime the offended is not to refuse the common marks of Christian charity. This, Christians, is the substance of all that is material on this subject. You see, in fine, how important it is to each of you in particular, not only to know the obligation, but likewise the utility of forgiving our neighbour, so often as occasion offers ; because, by forgiving, Christ Jesus, our Lord and our God, will forgive our manifold sins, and raise us one day to everlasting happiness in heaven. Amen.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE Pharisees, mentioned in this day's Gospel, were a set of men very learned in the law, who united to their learning an apparent great sanctity of life, whereby they obtained a considerable influence over the minds of the people. Some of these

Pharisees resolved to entrap our blessed Saviour in discourse, for which purpose they came and asked him publicly, "Was it lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar?" This question was very perplexing, as there were many among the Jews who were taught by the Pharisees, that, as the chosen people of God, the Jews were under no subjection to any master but Almighty God himself, and, consequently, no way liable to any taxes or impositions whatsoever. If, therefore, our Saviour should say it was lawful, the Pharisees imagined he must incur the censure of the greater part of the Jews, who were instructed by the Pharisees, and maintained a contrary opinion. On the other hand, if our Saviour should say it was not lawful, they imagined he must offend the Herodians, or that part of the Jews who adhered to Herod, and maintained, that as Judea was now in subjection to the Romans, who appointed Herod a king, they were obliged to pay taxes and imposts as fixed and determined by the law. How did our blessed Saviour behave at this critical juncture? He called for a piece of the tribute-money, and asked, "whose image it bore. And they answering Cæsar's, he said unto them, Give therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." By this wise and considerate answer he confounded the malice and invidious designs of the Pharisees, because he only adjudged to Cæsar what the nation acknowledged to be due unto Cæsar; but by adding, "and unto God the things that belong to God," he reproached the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, in refusing unto God the honour and glory, respect and veneration, due unto him, at the same time that they showed such apparent zeal for discharging the obligations of justice. The first thing they should have been mindful of, was "rendering unto God the things that belonged to God"—their love, homage, and adoration. This they entirely neglected, to apply to such observances as were capable of procuring them the esteem and applause of mankind. What the Pharisees were guilty of in the days of our blessed Saviour, is unhappily to be found in these our days, in the very centre of Christianity. How many Christians are to be found who never think seriously of what they owe the Almighty God, whilst they discharge with care what they conceive to be due unto man! It is, therefore, Christians, of the utmost consequence to know, 1st, the things that are due unto God; and, 2nd—the motives that should induce us to pay unto Almighty God those things that are his due.

What is it in general we owe unto God? St. Paul answers the question—"Honour and glory." Almighty God created the universe for no other end but the honour and glory of his

holy name. Before the world was created, before the heavens or the earth existed, the Almighty enjoyed in himself, in the contemplation of his infinite perfections, the completest happiness. He therefore created the world with a view of manifesting some of his adorable perfections—his power, wisdom, justice and goodness. His power—in creating from nothing, and with one single word, all things that exist in heaven above, on earth below, or in the waters under the earth. His wisdom—in the admirable mechanism, the just arrangement and suitable disposition of all the different parts of the universe. His justice—in assigning proper rewards for virtue, and punishments for vice. His goodness—in creating man with faculties capable of knowing and loving him, and of course capable of participating of that happiness he himself enjoys. In this grand display of the attributes of God, mankind is to contribute mostly to his glory, by a constant acknowledgment of his supreme power, goodness, and justice; or in other words, by a constant and faithful obedience to his laws. This is the sole end or destination of mankind. For this man was born, to worship, adore, and glorify Almighty God, and for this alone.

These divine honours we pay our Lord, in the faithful observance of those holy laws he has been pleased to lay down for us. So long as we fulfil those holy laws, we fulfil the end of our creation. But should we decline fulfilling them, we not only decline fulfilling the end of our creation, but subject ourselves, as well by this neglect, as by the actual commission of crimes, to the eternal punishments the Almighty God has decreed against all those that refuse him the honour and glory due to his infinite majesty and greatness. Is not this, notwithstanding, the case with the greater part of mankind? Even in this country, so long enlightened by the Gospel, how few are to be found who reflect seriously on the end of their creation? To judge from the conduct of most part of Christians, one should be led to think they were made for themselves alone, without any reference to Almighty God—for what is their aim, their pursuits? Is it the honour, the glory, the service of God? By no means; but the indulgence of their appetites, the gratification of their senses, the pursuit of pleasure, of wealth, of distinction, of honours, and all the vanities of life, everything except God and his holy service, for which alone they were created and made. “The world is lost for want of consideration,” says the prophet Jeremiah. How long then will you cease to think on your own most essential interests, Christians? Why will you abuse those

noble faculties of your souls, your understanding, and your will, in pursuing trifles and shadows? Surely there are no pleasures to be compared with the delights of heaven, no wealth with its possession, no distinctions or honours with the society of the blessed, the friends of God. Were you to consult your religion, or even your reason, you would know that "man was made," as the Holy Ghost says, "for the glory of God;" and consequently that you decline from the end of your creation, so long as you neglect paying unto Almighty God the honour and glory which are his due. How negligent, Christians, have we not all been in this particular? Which of us can say he has glorified Almighty God, since he came to the use of reason? Can we say with truth that we spent any one single day of our life in the service of God? How miserably then have we wasted our time since we came into the world? "We have been constantly going astray," as the royal prophet says, "and wearying ourselves in the ways of iniquity." Let us, therefore, humble ourselves in the presence of God, and reflect on our past infidelities and errors with confusion and sorrow. Let us conceive, at length, our end and destination, and finally resolve to live henceforward agreeable thereto; that is, to honour and glorify Almighty God to the end of our lives, by a faithful observance of his laws. Thus we shall render to God his due. The motives for doing so come next under consideration.

The first motive, Christians, is the subjection that is due from every creature to the Almighty God. For we are the work of his all-powerful hands. He is our first beginning and ultimate end. From him we received our souls and bodies with all their faculties and powers. Seeing, therefore, that all we have is derived from God, is it not both natural and just that all should be constantly referred unto him? This is the foundation of all natural religion: for there is no wise man upon earth, who listens to the dictates of reason, but must see within himself how necessary it is to acknowledge the supreme and infinite power of the first Being and fruitful Cause of all things, and that all creatures should be dependent on him and subservient to his will. This is likewise the foundation of that extremely pious and meritorious part of a spiritual life, which consists in confessing inwardly in the presence of Almighty God that we belong entirely to him, and therefore most willingly devote ourselves to his service, consecrating all our desires, actions, and affections, to the eternal honour and glory of his holy name. As the Almighty God is the supreme Master and Lord of all, all should be attentive to

pay him the respect and love and honour that are his due. If the servant is bound in duty to honour and obey his master, the subject his prince, the child his parent, what titles and claims has not the Almighty God to the love, honour, and obedience of all mankind? However just those claims, is it not the study of the greater part of mankind to dishonour the Almighty God, by breaking through and violating his holy laws? Can anything be more ungrateful, more criminal? Let us, therefore, remember, that it is the first essential duty of a man, a duty manifested by reason alone, to live in continual subjection to the laws of God. The second motive is our redemption in Christ. You know that in consequence of the transgression of our first parents, all mankind had forfeited every right and title to the kingdom of heaven; that they became likewise slaves to Satan, and liable to eternal perdition. This was the deplorable state of human nature after the fall of Adam, when the Son of God resolved in mercy to assume human nature, in order to redeem mankind by the effusion of his blood—and this merciful design he carried into execution in the plenitude of time, as St. Paul says, by dying for us upon the cross. By this death mankind has been redeemed from the slavery of sin and the eternal punishments due unto sin; and also restored to their primitive rights to the kingdom of heaven: so that we are all, properly speaking, as St. Paul observes, “the conquest and the purchase of Christ Jesus.” Now let me ask yourselves, what right must not this divine Redeemer and Purchaser of our souls, have to our love, affection, and services.

Add to all this the eternal rewards he has promised those who love and serve him. As supreme Lord and Master of all things he had an indisputable title to our submission and obedience without engaging himself to any rewards. Yet he has been pleased to make our own eternal happiness the necessary consequence of our obedience to his laws. Can anything equal this bounty and goodness? But the misfortune is that people never reflect on the happiness that must ensue from serving the Almighty God, and bestow their labour, application and services upon this ungrateful world, in which they meet with nothing but solicitude, affliction, and disappointment in the end. For what is all the happiness of this world at the hour of death? At that dreadful moment we certainly would give the whole world that we had spent our lives in the service of God. Why then shall we not adopt and follow the same principles at present? Let us now begin as the prophet says, what we never should have omitted,

paying to God the things that are due unto God, honour and glory, in obeying faithfully and constantly his holy laws. If we do, we certainly will receive from Almighty God the things that are due in virtue of his promise to all his faithful servants—grace in this life, and eternal happiness in the next. Amen.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE extraordinary faith of the woman who was cured by our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and the extraordinary blessing that attended it, are the most remarkable points in the Gospel of this day. We have instances in the Gospel of several persons being miraculously healed by our blessed Redeemer; but their faith was not perfect: for they applied publicly to Christ Jesus for that purpose, and humbly entreated to be relieved from their infirmities; even the very ruler of the synagogue, the president of the Jewish congregation, whose duty it was to explain true faith by his actions as well as doctrine. But the woman in question made no prayer or application unto Christ; she concluded within herself, that she would be infallibly cured if she could but touch the hem of his garment; so lively was her faith, and so great the opinion she had conceived of his power and goodness. Nor was she deceived, Christians, in her expectations, for the moment she touched the garment of Christ Jesus, he turned about, saying, "Daughter, be of good hope, thy faith has made thee sound;" and the woman was perfectly cured from that hour of the flux she had laboured under for many years, which she despaired of ever finding a remedy for, except from Christ Jesus. This miracle being performed, our Saviour went with the ruler of the synagogue to his house, where his daughter lay dead: but finding the house crowded with musicians and players upon instruments (as was customary with the Jews to hire people of this kind, to perform and exhibit a mournful sort of music at their funerals) he ordered them all to retire: in order to show us, as the holy fathers observe, that the blessings of God are not to be obtained amidst the tumult and dissipation of the world. Such as intend to partake of the blessings of heaven, must withdraw frequently from the crowd, to occupy their thoughts in the contemplation of heavenly things—of God and his infinite perfections—his power, greatness, wisdom, mercy and justice, and the obligations of their respective states. The voice of heaven can scarcely be heard

amidst the hurry and distractions of this world : nor can the grace of God make any great impression upon a mind quite occupied with the interests and advantages of this life, or a heart drunk and infatuated with its guilty joys. To prepare our souls therefore for the heavenly visitation, we must frequently banish from the mind all worldly thoughts, and root out from the heart all terrestrial affections. When this is done, we have a right to expect that Christ Jesus will visit us inwardly with his heavenly grace.

Soon as he had driven the crowd and players upon instruments out of the apartment, where the ruler of the synagogue's daughter lay dead, Christ Jesus "took hold of her by the hand ; and the girl rose up ; and the fame thereof ran over all that whole country." The publication of those illustrious and wonderful miracles was, in a very short time, a natural consequence of their performance for the good and happiness of man ; and great indeed must have been the ideas of the power and goodness of Christ Jesus, in those who had been eye-witnesses to these facts, in beholding, within the short compass of a few minutes, one cured of an inveterate and dangerous disorder, that already had baffled all her pursuits for a cure, by only touching the hem of his garment ; and another raised from the dead and restored to life, by his taking her by the hand ! Great, also, must have been the impression which these facts, verified by undeniable witnesses, made upon the minds of all that heard them. From these it was easy to conclude that the power of Christ Jesus was beyond all limitation, and his goodness equal to his power.

Have we not also, Christians, great reason to be impressed with lively sentiments upon these illustrious facts of our blessed Lord and Redeemer ? We cannot doubt but all those who laboured under any infirmity in the neighbouring parts, where the rumour of those miracles had spread, immediately came to Christ Jesus for relief. Why shall we not behave in the same manner ? Have we no spiritual wants or necessities ? Do we labour under no infirmity of the soul ? Alas ! how many are dead in reality in the eyes of God ; that is, deprived of his holy grace, which constitutes the spiritual life of the soul, and yet continue in that dreadful situation, without the least anxiety of mind ; without any desire, any application to recover the spiritual life, that life they had been deprived of by the commission of sin ! It remains for them, like the ruler of the synagogue, to recur to Christ Jesus, and beseech him with humility and compunction to restore their souls to life, by imparting his holy grace and the forgiveness of their sins.

For "he is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the whole world." He is the divine Author of life and death. "In his hands he holds the very keys of hell," as the royal prophet says. All you, therefore, that have lost the life of your souls, go to Christ Jesus : as God, he has power, as Christ, the goodness to restore your spiritual life, as related in this day's Gospel. Remember that he is still seated on a throne of mercy at the right hand of his Father in the kingdom of heaven, where he is continually exerting the supreme power that was given him as Man, over the whole creation. "If you sin," do not forget, says St. Paul, "that you have an intercessor in heaven, who is continually entreating and importuning the Father in your favour."

There are others who may not be quite dead in the eyes of God, but still are troubled with, and labour under many spiritual infirmities—a spirit of worldliness, a spirit of vanity, a certain coldness or indifference in the exercises of religion ; in a word, a constant negligence in the service of God. A situation of this kind, although it may not seem at first appearance to be any way dreadful, is certainly most fatal and prejudicial in its consequences ; because it leads by slight and secret, but criminal omissions, to omissions of our most essential obligations. The masters of a spiritual life say, it were much safer for one to have committed some considerable fault than remain in a state of this kind ; because a considerable fault creates a horror in the soul which moves it to repentance and amendment of life ; but people possessed of that torpor or coldness continue so for many years, and commonly pass away their lives in a certain indifference and lukewarmness, which disguise the most considerable faults, under the appearance of slight neglect and pardonable frailties. "You think," says the angel of the Lord in the Revelations, "you think you are alive, or in favour with God ; yet I tell you, you are dead, (in a sinful state,) in his sight.

If there be any amongst us, Christians, in this unhappy situation, who fancying themselves safe under false appearances of fulfilling their duty, whilst externally they fulfil the law, but fulfil it with languor, with coldness and indifference, they may justly be compared to the woman under our consideration, who for many years had been troubled with a slow, lingering, but mortal distemper. Although this should be the case, let us not despond. The remedy is at hand. Like the sick woman, let us turn to Christ Jesus and approach him. If she was perfectly restored to health from a mortal distemper by only touching the hem of his garment, what may not you

expect, you who approach humbly and sincerely to Christ in his holy sacrament, wherein he gives himself entirely to us for the sanctification and nourishment of our souls ! You must know, Christians, it is the peculiar effect of this sacrament to strengthen and invigorate the soul, and thereby banish that weakness and feebleness of spirit, which hinder a great many from serving Almighty God with the fervency and fidelity he requires. Every sacrament has a peculiar virtue. Baptism cleanses the soul from original sin, makes us members of Christ, children of God, and heirs to the kingdom of heaven. Confirmation makes us perfect Christians, and gives us the strength and resolution that are necessary to profess our faith publicly, even in the greatest dangers of life and property. Penance blots out and effaces the sins committed after baptism, and restores us to the friendship and sanctifying grace of God. But the Eucharist nourishes the soul, adds to the grace and righteousness we already had received in the sacrament of penance. And this is the reason why it was instituted by Christ Jesus, under the marks and appearances of nourishment. "My flesh is truly food," says our Lord, "and my blood is truly drink," whence divines conclude, that as material food nourishes the body, so the divine Eucharist must nourish the soul, and consequently become the most effectual remedy for the spiritual weaknesses of the soul. Let me repeat it, Christians, if such great virtue and efficacy could arise to the sick woman of the Gospel, from the bare touch, not of the body of Christ, but of the hem of his garment, what blessings have you not a right to expect—what strength to resist your spiritual enemies—what vigour to advance forward in the ways of eternal life, from the participation of the body and blood, the soul and divinity of Christ Jesus in his holy sacrament ! It is here he invites us to come unto him, in order to be cured of all the infirmities of our souls ; saying as he formerly did in the Gospel, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are burthened, and I will refresh you." Why then do you not answer and comply with the tender invitations of Christ Jesus ? You know the miserable condition of your souls. You know how feeble your virtue is, how little sensible you are of the things of God. Why do you not then seek after and make use of "that heavenly food which," the royal prophet says, "makes and constitutes the strong?"

Approach, therefore, respectfully, the person of Christ Jesus ; touch the hem of his garment with a lively faith and firm confidence in his mercies, and you certainly will be cured—cured of a spirit of worldliness, or that excessive attachment to

this world which absorbs all your thoughts and affections, and leaves no time to think of God or the things of God—cured of a spirit of vanity and folly, which makes you set the greatest value upon the painted toys and gaudy trifles of this world; whilst you utterly neglect the most material concerns of your soul, the joys and glory of the kingdom of heaven—cured of a certain insensibility, which leaves you no relish for the things of God; no desire of seeing or enjoying God—cured, in a word, of certain uneasiness, a kind of secret desperation which leaves you little or no hopes in the mercies of God, and makes you tremble whenever you look into eternity, and consider the dreadful fate of those who become victims to his severe and inflexible justice. Approach, I say, respectfully to your God, and you shall hear within yourselves the comfortable assurance our Saviour gave the woman in the Gospel: “Be of good courage, my child, thy faith has made thee whole.” How delightful must an inward inspiration of this kind be! Undoubtedly it surpasses infinitely all the happiness of this life; and it is always grounded on the love of God and the strongest hopes of eternal happiness. Amen.

LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE Church finishes and begins the ecclesiastical year with the same Gospel, or that Gospel which exhibits a picture of the general Judgment, and the dreadful circumstances attending it. As the general Judgment is the most awful mystery of our holy religion, the Church is of opinion that she cannot recall it too often to the consideration of her children; in order, by a just apprehension of the terrible judgments of the Lord, to withdraw their hearts from all attachment to this perishable world, and its deceitful, cheating vanities, and to reclaim them from sin, and vice, and error. There is, however, some little difference between the Gospel this day, and that of next Sunday, which is this. The Gospel for the first Sunday in Advent barely treats of the last Judgment and its foregoing signs; whereas, in the Gospel this day, we have not only an account of the general confusion and destruction which are to happen the last day, but likewise of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple—the dismal signs that were to be forerunners thereof—the calamity and entire ruin of the Jewish nation, which was a punishment inflicted on them by Almighty God for their obstinacy and infidelity, for having rejected the Messiah promised unto their fore-

fathers—Christ Jesus, the Son of God, and Redeemer of mankind. To effect the ruin of the Jewish nation which had been determined on by Almighty God, Jerusalem and its Temple should be destroyed, and laid level with the ground, as being the seat of the power, wealth, and religion of the Jewish people. This happened some years after the death of our Saviour, when Titus, general of the Roman armies, by command of his father, the Emperor Vespasian, besieged it with a mighty force, took, sacked, pillaged, and destroyed it; overthrowing its walls and edifices, razing its Temple, and killing by the sword the miserable few that a terrible famine had spared.

As this was the greatest calamity that could befall the Jews, our blessed Saviour was pleased to forewarn his disciples against it, for fear they, or those amongst the Jews who would become Christians, should be involved in the general destruction of the nation. For this purpose he desires them to fly to the mountains for safety, to avoid perishing with those that were to die, in obstinately defending Jerusalem and the Temple against the Romans. When were they to fly? "As soon as the abomination of desolation, foretold by the prophet Daniel, should appear in the holy place," our Saviour says; that is, as soon as the holy land, the holy city and the Temple should be profaned by the introduction of the idols or images of the false gods, which were painted on the Roman standards or colours, and which are always called abominations in holy Writ. The signal, therefore, of the approaching ruin of Jerusalem, and, consequently, the moment for the disciples of Christ to fly, and shun inevitable destruction, was the time when the Roman colours should be displayed in sight of Jerusalem. "Then," says our Saviour, "then let those that are in Judea fly to the mountains: and he that is on the housetop, let him not come down to take anything out of his house: and he that is in the field let him not return back to take his coat." By these expressions our Saviour signifies beforehand how pressing and urgent the danger would be; and consequently how far it was incumbent on every one to provide for his own safety and preservation without any negligence or delay. "Woe be unto those that are with child: and to those that give suck in those days:" because people in this condition are greatly embarrassed; and always incapable of taking the active steps that are necessary to guard against any imminent danger. "Pray that your flight may not happen in winter, or on the sabbath," our Saviour says; because it is hard to undertake a difficult journey in the severity of

winter; and because it was not lawful to travel more than about one mile on the Sabbath-day, which should give the enemy an opportunity of taking them and putting them to death. "For then shall be great tribulation," our Saviour adds, "such as hath not been since the beginning of the world, until now, nor shall be." Great, indeed, was this tribulation, as we are assured by all the historians of those times; especially by Josephus, the most celebrated historian among the Jews, who relates that eleven hundred thousand Jews perished either by famine or the sword, in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple! He further relates a very extraordinary circumstance indeed, that no one of the disciples of the Lord, or of the Jews who became Christians by the ministry of the apostles, was involved in this general calamity of the nation. Being warned and admonished by the disciples of our Lord, who had heard from the lips of Christ Jesus the prediction of the approaching ruin of Jerusalem and the Temple, they fled seasonably beyond the river Jordan, into a little town called Pella, where they escaped all the miseries and calamities of war.

Almighty God was so much incensed against the Jews for their obstinacy and infidelity, that probably he would have put an end to the whole nation at this very period, had it not been for a few amongst them, who, faithful to the light that had shined before their eyes, acknowledged Christ Jesus as the Son of God and Redeemer of mankind. These were the elect amongst the Jews; and it was in favour of these few elect, that the Almighty was pleased to shorten the days of their public calamity, as the Gospel says, and preserve the remains of that unhappy nation, which are to subsist to the end of the world, when they are to be received again into favour and converted to the faith of Christ, as St. Paul testifies, saying, "The remains of Israel shall be saved." In the meantime, they are to be without power, jurisdiction, or dominion; without king, without country, without altar, without sacrifice, deprived as they are of Jerusalem and the Temple, wherein alone it was lawful to offer up sacrifices unto the Lord. This clearly points out their reprobation, as the prophets had foretold, when they should be no longer the people of God; when the Almighty would make unto himself a new and chosen people, composed of all the nations upon the earth; which has been actually accomplished by the establishment of the Christian religion all over the world. Before we dismiss this subject of the destruction of Jerusalem, as foretold by Christ Jesus in the Gospel of this day, it is

necessary to inform you of the attempts that have been made by the Emperor Julian, called the Apostate, in order to frustrate and annul the prediction of Christ in this respect. From an irreconcilable hatred to Christianity, and its divine author, Christ Jesus, this impious and daring emperor sent a strong and powerful army to rebuild the walls and Temple of Jerusalem. But, behold ! whilst they were employed in this sacrilegious attempt, huge balls of fire issued out of the very foundations of the earth, and struck the workmen with such terror, as obliged them immediately to desist and abandon their enterprise ! So true it is that heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of God shall remain firm and unshaken, whilst all the presumptuous endeavours of man against it, shall fall to the ground. These particulars, which are highly worthy of recollection, as they reflect the greatest honour upon our holy religion, and the greatest shame and confusion upon the enemies of Christ, are related by the best Pagan historians of those early times.

Besides the signs of war which were to announce the approaching ruin of Jerusalem, Christ Jesus was pleased to give his disciples other signs of consequence, whereby they might distinguish the impending ruin ; namely the great number of false prophets that would appear at that very period. In the history of those times we read that Judea was never infested with a greater number of impostors and false prophets, than some time after the death of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ ; and during the very war in which Jerusalem and the Temple were demolished and the whole nation reduced and dispersed, some of those impostors, Josephus says, after seducing multitudes of the people, retired into a great desert near Jerusalem, where they set themselves up successively for the Messiah ; and were daily promising the poor deluded people that followed them immediate deliverance from all the misfortunes they laboured under ; but these vain promises soon ended in the entire ruin of the seducers and seduced. Those false prophets our Saviour means when he warns his disciples in the Gospel this day : “ If they shall say to you, Behold he (the Messiah) is in the desert—go ye not out.” For the knowledge of the Messiah was not to be confined to any desert, or corner, or private spot of the earth, but to shine to the whole world, like the lightning which scarcely starts in the east when it is perceived in the most distant parts of the west.

From the signs that were to announce the fall of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation, our Saviour passes unto the signs that

are to usher in the end of time and the entire dissolution of the earthly frame of this world. "Then the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light : then the stars shall fall, and the powers of the heavens be shaken. Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man, coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty. Then shall he send forth his angel, with a trumpet and loud voice, to gather together his elect from the four winds, from the highest parts of the heaven to the utmost bounds thereof." From these awful preparations the most tremendous scene follows. This is the day of sorrows foretold by the prophets—"a day of wrath, of misery and woe." Then shall we conceive how "dreadful it is," as St. Paul says, "to fall into the hands of the living God."

Consider, Christians, and reflect, whilst time remains for reflection, that we must be all witnesses, one day, of this dreadful scene. We must all appear on the last day before the Son of Man, Jesus Christ our God, to receive according to our works—eternal life, if we lead here a just and righteous life, by fulfilling the laws of Christ : but, good Lord, deliver us ! eternal death—eternal pain, and torture, and sorrow, if we lead a sinful life. Which will be our lot ? Shall we ascend with Christ, or descend to the burning lake ? One thing is certain—our fate is in our own hands. There is none of us but has it in his power, by the grace of God, to attain to eternal happiness. For this purpose let us fear the Lord and his terrible judgments. Let us fulfil his holy laws during our conversation on earth ; and if you do, I promise you, on the part of Christ Jesus, our Lord, that on the last day he will bring you with himself, soul and body, into the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

SERMONS ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS.

SERMON I.

ON THE OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW.

What is written in the Law? Do this and thou shalt live.

Luke, c. x., v. 26 and 28.

ALMIGHTY God, as supreme Master of his gifts, could absolutely have promised and granted eternal happiness to mankind in general, without any condition or stipulation whatever. But this he was not pleased to do. On the contrary, he has ordained that eternal happiness should be the reward of our fidelity. "Heaven is a crown of justice," according to St. Paul; a crown bestowed as a reward for our works of justice upon earth, and a crown never granted but to such as deserve it. Whoever, therefore, aspires to eternal happiness, must consider it in this light, and be perfectly convinced within himself, that he never will be made partaker of everlasting felicity unless he shall deserve it. How deserve it? By fulfilling the law of God. This is the agreement that God has been pleased to make with mankind in the person of Jesus Christ, for he says in the Gospel, "What is written in the law? Do this, and thou shalt live,"—or attain to life everlasting. Although Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, and Redeemer of mankind, had an undoubted right to enact new laws relating to salvation, yet he was content with enforcing the laws already established, and chiefly contained in the Decalogue, or ten Commandments, extending them to a larger compass, and raising them to a higher degree of perfection; because these laws were fully sufficient to obtain the end of their institution, namely—the glory of God, and the happiness of mankind. Now these laws, as they stand enforced anew, extended to a larger compass, and raised to a higher degree of perfection by Jesus Christ, the divine master and legislator of mankind, are comprised in the Gospel, and the observance of these laws is what Jesus Christ declares to be a necessary condition towards obtaining life everlasting. The observance of the law of God being then the groundwork of our salvation, the knowledge of this law becomes the first duty of every Christian. All knowledge before this melts into air. The

proud philosophy of the ancients, and the deep researches of the wise ones of old, what have they tended to? At most, only to gratify idle speculation in examining the laws of nature, and often drawing wrong conclusions from false principles: but the laws of moral piety and moral rectitude were set aside, unless built upon their own systems; and thus those laws which alone should form the true study of man—those laws which comprehend everything sublime, everything awful, everything terrible to man—those laws, the observance of which raises man beyond everything in the visible creation, were made to give way to vanity or interest. The desire of appearing, rather than of being wise, smothered the seeds of wisdom and truth, which, in a greater or lesser degree, Almighty God has planted in the heart of every human creature.

Far removed from you let this approach be, my brethren, who certainly lie under greater obligations to the goodness of heaven than those philosophers of old, for the many blessings you enjoy, and which they did not, in being born, and reared, and instructed in the bosom of the Church of Christ, and the way shown to you which leads to heaven, by obeying the laws. But in proportion as those advantages are great, so will your guilt become greater, unless, by faithfully observing the law, you fulfil the duties it prescribes, and thereby manifest how far superior the simple wisdom of a Christian is, beyond all the boasted wisdom of proud, profane, and worldly knowledge. Jesus Christ had laid down laws for the government of your lives, and enforces them by rewards and punishments. As there is no exemption in this case, I repeat it, it becomes the first duty of a Christian to know them; because a knowledge of the law is a necessary condition for observing the law. This subject, therefore, naturally branches out into two distinct points, to the consideration of which I solicit your attention: first—an inviolable attachment to the law; and, secondly—a faithful compliance therewith.

First—That attachment to the law which the law requires, is not barely confined to the study of its principles, but to the performance of its obligations. Many there are who study the law from a spirit of vanity, and a desire of manifesting to the world how much they are conversant with the deepest mysteries and the strictest obligations of religion. Others are eternally discoursing of the law, extolling its perfections, and recommending unto others the practice thereof, with the greatest, and in appearance, the sincerest zeal imaginable: but then their actions are always at variance with their words, and their conduct quite

the reverse of their outward principles. In this particular they are like the Pharisees, whom our Saviour frequently reproaches in the Gospel, with speaking a great deal of the law, and performing little or nothing of what they said. Some are seen to show the greatest conformity with the law, and put on a most imposing mask of austerity : but this they do from a spirit of hypocrisy, which, under a holy and sanctified appearance, frequently conceals the greatest iniquity and dissoluteness. People of this character are what St. Paul calls "painted sepulchres ;" white and shining outside, but within corruption and putrefaction. The man who is truly virtuous, has the law of God not in his thoughts alone, or in his words, not in his air or appearance, but where King David carried it, as the Holy Ghost declares, "in his heart." In the heart of a virtuous man the law resides ; there it rules. From the heart, as from its centre, it spreads and extends its influence to all the faculties of the soul, so as to regulate all her thoughts and desires, all her actions and affections. What the soul is to the body—the vivifying principle, the same is the law of God to every virtuous man. It is this divine law that animates and governs his whole conduct ; advises him in doubt, directs him in deliberation, enlightens him in action, and even sanctifies his rest. Neither the allurements of riches, the attraction of pleasures, the show of grandeur, nor the opinions or prejudices of men have the least influence over him.

The study of men, in general, is bent upon acquiring new lights, gratifying curiosity, or collecting information, if possible, upon everything interesting to this life. But the great study of the law of God, and the observance of its precepts, whereon not only life eternal, but death eternal depends, is and should be the first and chief study of all rational beings, especially of those who possess so much knowledge upon all other affairs.

Some study to rise a great name by rank, honours, illustrious actions, or by composing and publishing works of science. This empty name, even during life, what doth it add to a man of sense ? At the last period of life what consolation doth it afford ? And in future ages, should your name be mentioned with admiration for the depth of your understanding, or the brilliancy of your actions, what will it avail should you be cast off by God for your inobservance of his holy laws. The knowledge of everything that reason can comprehend, without the knowledge of the law of God, is smoke. Should you be able to count the stars, and see into the reasons which moved the eternal mind of God, by one word to create

them so numerous, so various, so differently placed, and for what ends, still this knowledge without the knowledge of the law of God, would be truly vain. On the other hand, a knowledge of the law of God is true wisdom, although unaccompanied by any other wisdom. The law of God, to a virtuous man, becomes a monitor, friend, and companion. The only thing he consults upon every occasion is that law, which is deeply imprinted in his heart. When the law commands and calls aloud for the performance of some material and important duty, he immediately obeys and breaks forth into action : when the law forbids and checks his pursuits, he immediately desists. When the law barely points out the danger, he walks with the utmost caution, "neither declining to the right nor to the left," as the royal prophet says, but following steadily the heavenly light that shines within him, his docile mind pursues the easy and direct way which the law points out to eternal happiness.

Such are the fruits of an attachment to the law of God which the virtuous man possesses. Without such attachment, men, governed by their own reason, are apt to judge of all things by their reason ; to presume on their own lights and the solidity of their judgment ; to form judgments from their private opinions, and resolutions from their intentions. Almighty God, the hidden light of every mind, and the secret mover of every heart, they neither consult nor think of, nor pray to, relying upon themselves, and the knowledge they possess. Error therefore naturally creeps in, and passion domineers. The law of God not only instructs but corrects ; not only enlightens reason, but breaks down passion or concupiscence. A sincere attachment to this law clearly shows how much we love God, and God on his part will not fail to love us. "Happy is the man," says the Holy Ghost, "that could do evil, and did not do it ; that could transgress, and transgressed not." But what is this happy conduct owing to ?—to an inward attachment, or obedience to the law ; to an attachment or obedience which is lodged in, and strongly impressed on the soul. This attachment to the law should be common to us all, because it is the very first of our obligations, an obligation so great, that we should be always disposed to sacrifice our dearest interests, our fortunes, and our lives, rather than transgress any one essential point of the law. I will go farther, and say with all divines in ancient or modern times, that our attachment to the law ought to operate so far as to induce us to make the foregoing sacrifices, rather than transgress the smallest point of the law : for our blessed

Saviour says in the Gospel, "If any one love his father or mother, his brother or sister, nay, his very life before me (before the fidelity, submission, and attachment due to his law) he is not worthy to be called my disciple!"

Therefore an inward, sincere and inviolable attachment to the law of God, is the very first step to virtue, the very first qualification which renders us worthy the name and appellation of Christians: so that wherever that attachment and fidelity to the law are wanting, there can be no virtue, no Christianity, no religion. But where is this inward, sincere, and inviolable attachment to the law of God to be met with? Among the Christians of our days? No; nothing is so rare. False philosophy, false principles, false ideas, supersede the law of God, and most people think and act from the false impulse of these false principles, whereby that war is constantly maintained, which we daily behold between truth and false opinions. Amidst this general wreck of sound reason, there are a few, but few they are, who regulate their actions by the law of God: I say but few, because what the generality of the Christians of our days inquire into, is not whether a thing be lawful or unlawful; whether it be conformable or repugnant to the laws of God; but whether it be suitable to their interest, or any way conducive to the increase of their credit or fortune in the world. This is the principle that rules in their hearts, and breathes throughout all their actions; and this must appear plain to any man who considers their conduct. For can anything be more common than to see numbers of people daily supporting their credit or increasing their fortunes by means directly contrary to the law of God? The only thing they will make some difficulty to commit, is a flagrant injustice, or some notorious act of dishonesty. It is not the magnitude of the crime, but the publicity that deters them. If the world is blind to their wickedness, they make no account that the eyes of God are open on them. The laws of men are cautiously and cunningly eluded; but the laws of God are quite overlooked. If the laws of men are publicly respected, the laws of God are privately despised.

Now should a minister of the Gospel have zeal and resolution enough to let them know that there are a great many points of the law they daily transgress, the violation of which makes them obnoxious to the justice of God, and will certainly exclude them for ever, if they do not repent, from the kingdom of heaven, they only laugh at the wholesome information—from their behaviour, one should really imagine the law was not made for them; but that they had a particular exemption from

the law : but there can be no such thing, because the law is universal. It comprehends all Christians as one great family, without distinction of high or low, rich or poor, wise or ignorant, elevated or humble. All ranks, all states, all conditions are subject to the law ; for as the Almighty God is the supreme master of the whole creation, it is clear he had a right to extend his uncontrollable power to what limits, and exert it in what manner he thought proper.

In the order of nature he has connected all bodies by a certain combination of parts, and annexed certain laws to each ; so has he done with regard to the rational and intellectual part of the creation, by laying down certain laws for their conduct, the observance of which he requires under the severest penalties. This appears from the Old and also from the New Law. In the Old Law we find that Almighty God, after conversing many days with Moses upon Mount Sinai, amidst thunder and lightning, and such dreadful appearances as visibly bespoke the presence of the divinity, manifested at length his awful will, and engraved his commands on tables of stone, which commands were by his orders published to the whole people of Israel. It appears more fully in the New Law, as we read in St. Matthew, that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, upon the point of commissioning his apostles to go and preach the Gospel throughout the world, addressed them in the following words : “ Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; and order them to observe and fulfil whatever I command you.” Hence it follows, that the law was to extend to, and bind all those who in future times should be made acquainted with the all-saving name of Christ. Under the pale of the Mosaic law the Jews alone, as the chosen people of God, were comprehended ; and by Jews I mean in the first instance, the posterity of Abraham, and in the second, those Gentiles who became converted to the Jewish religion, and incorporated with the body of that people. But the more perfect law of Jesus Christ, widely stretching out its arms over all nations and countries, all tribes and people, comprehends all, invites all, shelters all, regulates all. It regulates them by offering grace, without which the law could not be executed, to enable all men to discharge the duties prescribed by the law. By grace, or that supernatural aid which comes from God alone, we not only are enabled to discover our duties laid down in the law, but to discharge those duties as the law requires. Moreover, it would not be consistent with the goodness of the Almighty to lay down a law for mankind,

without annexing to the observance, or non-observance of that law, such rewards or punishments as were proportioned to the infinite dignity and unbounded goodness of the Almighty God.

Further, Almighty God has not only laid down certain laws for us to observe, in consequence of his supreme and uncontrollable power over all creation, but has likewise made the observance of those laws the only title to the kingdom of heaven. You have the words of Jesus Christ for it : " If thou hast a mind to enter into life ; (meaning eternal life) keep the commandments : " observe the law ; that is your title to the realms above. Such was the answer given by Christ to the doctor of the law, one of the Sanhedrim, or chief council of the Jews, who, standing up, interrogated our Saviour what he should do to obtain life everlasting. Our Saviour answering, said unto him : " What is written in the law ? and what readest thou in it ? Do this and thou shalt live." Unless you observe the law you shall not live ; because the observance of the law is the only means of obtaining life eternal—the only title to the kingdom of heaven.

Stop a while, my brethren, and consider with me whether or not this great and fundamental principle of religion—the observance of the law, be the prevailing principle in the actions, the governing principle in the conduct of modern Christians. This reflection is far from gratifying either you or me. Modern Christians are fashionable Christians ; that means, people, who, conforming to custom, acknowledge and believe in God, but no farther. All ceremonies and sacraments to them are mummary. " Nature made man lord of the creation, free like air, and gave him senses to be indulged, not repressed." Such is the philosophy of modern Christians. And to this philosophy, if I may apply so fine a word to so foul a subject, are owing all the evils of this life, and all the miseries of the next. For thus modern Christians would fain go to heaven, not by fulfilling the law, but by transgressing it ; not by incidental transgression, but by deliberate and systematic violation, and defiance of all law and power.

As I hope that none of you, my brethren, are fashionable Christians in the sense I have touched upon : as I hope such black iniquity is not applicable to any one of you, I shall spare you and myself the trouble of combating and reproving it ; but you should know that so soon as the stamp of Christianity is affixed on us by baptism, from that moment forward, to the last moment of life, we are bound by the laws of God, and obliged, under pain of reprobation, to fulfil the whole law. Thus a soldier who enters the service of his prince.

is bound to obey and conform to such military laws, as are or have been enacted, however severe or difficult in the execution. But the laws of men differ from the laws of God in this: that the laws of men are often severe in their object, difficult in execution, and wrong in principle. Were I disposed to illustrate this argument by point proof, the history of my own country would afford me ample field, provided I may call that country my own where I am ignored by the laws, although the soil gave me birth: but such discussion ill becomes a minister of a crucified God, to preach whom and his holy laws for the instruction and government of your lives is his only duty, and to show that whilst the laws of man are sometimes hard and difficult, the laws of God are never so; and in this all true servants of Christ agree, as Jesus Christ has said: "My yoke is sweet and my burthen light."

Although you join me most heartily in condemning fashionable Christians, still, I beseech you, turn your thoughts from those whom the follies and allurements of life draw away from the observance of the law of God, to the manner you fulfil the law, who are not drawn away by such temptations. Can it be true, and still deplorably true it is, that you who profess yourselves servants of the Lord, and look up to his holy residence, you who daily venerate in our tabernacles the great eternal God, who made you and shall judge you—you who manifest a Christian-like docility in favouring me this day with your attendance should still offend and insult the most high God, more than the heathen? The heathen knows not the Lord God, nor his holy law: you do, and still you disobey his law. You curse and swear—blasphemy, detraction, lying, drunkenness, and debauchery, are your familiar exercises.

Some comply occasionally with the law, like time servers, but never fail to transgress it when their interest or their fortune is at stake. And yet such people expect to be saved—How, without fulfilling the law? Lord God, how great is this error! Are you still ignorant that salvation can never be obtained but by a faithful compliance with the law? This is the covenant made between God and Moses, on behalf of the people: this the covenant that Jesus Christ has made with all his disciples—the condition upon which heaven alone can be obtained, and the promises of God fulfilled under the New Law. Without a faithful observance of the law, all other acts of religion will never bring you to life everlasting. Although you should fast and pray, and give alms; although you should fill his temple with oblations, cover his altars with gifts, and

pass away whole days in prayer, all these will not avail to obtain the end that every human being should have in view, the glory of heaven, unless you be sincerely and effectually disposed to fulfil the law, and the whole law, upon every occasion, let the loss or danger to yourself be what it may.

It follows then, that as the number are few who are thus sincerely attached to the law, few are they who will be saved. I acknowledge it—but the perdition of the great bulk even of Christians is not owing to the law, for the law is plain, practicable, and even easy in the execution; not to Almighty God, for he offers us abundant grace to fulfil the law, and even incites us by the grandest promise—heaven, and deters us from disobedience by the severest penalties—pain and punishment, both eternal; but to the perverseness of our will and conduct, in refusing submission to the law, or informing ourselves of what it enjoins and forbids. Stop your career, this day, in the broad road that leads to death, and, as holy David did, place “the law of God in the midst of your hearts.” Convince yourselves that you never will be saved unless you are sincerely attached to the law, so as to make it the rule of your whole conduct. This alone is serving the Almighty God “in spirit,” as St. Paul directs; this alone is paying Jesus Christ the true adoration he requires from all his followers; this, in a word, is attaining that true justice, so very different from the false justice of the Pharisees, which the Almighty demands at our hands, as the indispensable, the only title to the kingdom of heaven. This salutary justice consists, as I have shown you, in an inviolable attachment to the law, which forms the foundation for that regular compliance with the law, whereon the beautiful structure of a Christian life appears, which I bound myself concisely and plainly to show you in the sequel.

Second—It is not enough to have an inviolable attachment to the law—the injunctions it contains must likewise be fulfilled in the order and manner prescribed by the law. For the better understanding of this, you must know the law contains various observances of different kinds; some more material than others. The material observances are called, by divines, the precepts of the law; those less material, counsels, or points of perfection. Now in order to fulfil the law properly and regularly, we should always begin with the precepts or points of indispensable obligation.—For this is the rule our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, lays down in the Gospel, when he says: “These things (the precepts or material points) you ought to do, and not leave the others undone”—from whence it clearly

follows, that our first care should be to discharge every essential obligation, before we would think of points of greater perfection. To do otherwise would be running counter to the directions of the eternal wisdom of God, and consequently mistaking a shadow and glaring appearance for the substance and reality of virtue—it being impossible that anything can be virtuous or good which does not square with the rules and maxims of Jesus Christ.

Although the precepts of the law must always take precedence of the counsels, although the counsels of the law never can be deemed virtuous, unless preceded by the precepts, or built upon the accomplishment of the essential points of the law; still this is one of the most prevailing disorders in the world. I appeal to your own experience, how often do we behold persons occupied in the more perfect observances, while at the very time they utterly neglect the most material obligations of the law! We shall see this great and general abuse of common reason more clearly by a few examples.

This citizen is extremely hospitable, kind to strangers, generous to his acquaintances, and even benevolent to the poor—but then he never thinks of paying his just debts, either to the merchant who supplied him with goods, or to the friend who advanced his money to relieve him in distress, or to the servant, or workman, who spent many long, laborious days in his ungrateful service. People of this description are not uncommon in the world—but let them know the works of justice should go before hospitality, generosity, or charity. Charity in this case loses its claim to virtue: to make it a virtuous act, it must not trample upon, but be supported and borne up by justice. Strict justice is seen in all the dealings of that fair female, whose religious disposition, and pious conduct, daily edifies the Church; whose long and pensive prayer, sublime and heavenly contemplation begin and close each day: but as the Holy Ghost says in the Revelations, “I have a word or two” for her. Her flippant tongue detracts and slanders; her lips, occupied every morning and evening in praising the holy name of God, invoking his mercies, and deprecating his justice, are seen in every company running down her acquaintance or neighbours with keen invective or bitter gall. That mercy she daily calls for, she daily refuses to her absent, unoffending neighbour, whose failings are magnified, whose intentions are blackened, and even whose virtuous actions are besmeared by the keen poison of her venomous tongue. But know, fair traducer, full of false piety, that the law of God requires charity towards your neighbour

before all things—before this mock piety and pretended godliness, which insults, not honours ; provokes, not appeases, the Majesty of heaven—that charity is required by the law, which spares and protects character, veils over failings, praises good intention, and honours virtuous actions.

In others, indeed, is seen an exemption from this blemish : a foul mouth forms no part of their character. Nakedness, hunger, and sickness, exhibit the monuments of their well-known charities : the people where they live find always in them able guardians of property, kind protectors of fame—religion also finds in them warm advocates, zealous for the glory of God, and the advancement of virtue. But still religion weeps over their failings—they never forgive an injury—offend them in any degree, and you are sure ever to find them bitter enemies. As in heathen Rome, the Vestal virgins always kept a lighted fire in their temple, so those Christians by name keep kindled in their hearts the unhallowed fire of abominable resentment, which, growing strong by time, bursts forth and dies away in the offender's ruin. To treasure up resentment for a convenient opportunity, is one of those acts most degrading to human nature. With such people the law of God is but a sound without a name. If any one in this assembly harbours resentment, malice, anger, or hatred, let him uproot it and cast it off, as a serpent in the bosom, or fire in the hand ; otherwise the mercies of the Lord can never alight on such people : for you are bound by the law, before charity or zeal, to show mercy, clemency, and forgiveness !

Once more allow me to call your attention to another description of Christians, very fond of certain austerities and devotions of their own devising. Their exalted virtue disdains walking in the common road, the beaten track, with the rest of the faithful ; nor can they relish any practice of piety which may be known unto and observed by the crowd. Like the unhappy Gentoos who inhabit the Eastern countries of Asia, they form to themselves fantastical ideas of honouring the Divinity. Utterly reverse to that plain, easy, regular, but unaffected deportment, which is the true character of unfeigned godliness, and was so very discernible in Jesus Christ himself, they always aim at something extraordinary and out of the common road. Everything of this kind they are strictly observant of ; but they make no difficulty to omit the acts of self-denial commanded by the Church, in certain seasons sacred to penance and humiliation ; nor will they condescend to join with the faithful in the solemn and public worship, which is paid in our holy temples, on stated days, unto the

Lord. But let such people know, if any such there be here, that what the law requires before all things, before their pretended illustrations and imaginary perfections, is obedience; because the Holy Ghost says, by the voice of the prophet Samuel, "obedience is better than sacrifice." Let them consider well the ponderous words of St. Paul: "The angel of darkness sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light," to seduce and lead astray all vain, aspiring, and presumptuous minds, into the most pernicious errors and shameful illusions.

This is certainly the case with a great many who pass for pious and godly souls in the opinion of the undiscerning crowd; but are quite otherwise before the all-discerning eyes of God, inasmuch as they neglect, amidst all their apparent godliness, the most material points of the law: the very points they should always begin with, conformably to the orders of Jesus Christ. The evils I complain of, this false virtue, which is but a mask for the blackest crimes, are not confined to our days alone. Except in the primitive Church, where also we find an infamous Simon, the evil had existed in every age and in every country. St. Austin complains bitterly that this evil was common among the faithful in Africa in his days. He knew many who thought nothing of getting drunk, and running into other criminal excesses, but were most scrupulously exact in wearing a white garment during the first eight days after their baptism. This is the foliage, not the fruit—the shadow, not the substance—the name, not the spirit of our holy religion. Here is not that virtue, that full observance of the law which Jesus Christ requires at our hands, as the only title to the kingdom of heaven. No: it is no more or less than a Pharisaic virtue, a virtue reprov'd by Jesus Christ, and declared by him to be insufficient for obtaining life everlasting. This is the virtue our Saviour lashes so severely in the Gospel. Here are his words, they abound in deep instructions: listen to them.—"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites; you scrupulously pay the tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin" (these are minute and insignificant herbs), "but then you have left the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith undone. These you ought to do, and not leave those undone." Would to God the same evil existed no longer! but the contrary is too well known, not only with regard to the general but likewise the particular obligations of the law.

Besides the general duties prescribed by the law, which are common to all Christians, such as justice, piety, and mercy, there are other essential obligations peculiar to the different

conditions of life. A general of an army, a governor of a city, an administrator of the laws, or of property ; legislators, and men in power, have all duties to fulfil different from those in private stations. The virtues of a single life, and those of the wedded state, are not of the same kind. A husband and wife, a master and servant, a parent and child, have each particular relations to each other, which they are bound by the law reciprocally to fulfil, so that if a man should neglect these particular engagements he is bound to by the law, equally as to the general engagements I have spoken of, he can never be deemed a virtuous and upright man, let his adherence be what it may to those general precepts. For true virtue and uprightness consist not in fulfilling a part of, but all justice ; and fulfilling all justice comprehends, it is plain, the performance of every duty.

Besides, as Almighty God instituted the different conditions of life, for the support of the moral union and harmony he intended should subsist between them, it is manifest he must require from every individual a steady concurrence towards that end, which can never be obtained but by a punctual discharge of the relative duties peculiar to each respective rank. It then becomes the bounden duty of every Christian to examine and search within his own breast, how far he discharges the duties peculiar to his state of life ; and to convince himself he never will enter the kingdom of God, should he prove deficient in this material point of the law. Let every parent consider he is obliged by the law, not only to make a proper provision for his offspring, in those things that relate as well to food and raiment, as to settlement in life ; but likewise to educate them in the love and fear of God ; inciting them continually to virtue by word, but chiefly by example ; and frequently inculcating on their tender minds the great principles of religion—the love, respect, and fidelity due to the Almighty God, the great and noble rewards that are promised unto those who love and serve him ; and the dreadful punishments decreed against all such as transgress his holy laws. Let every master likewise consider, that he is bound by the law, not only to pay his servants honestly, and all those who derive under him, but also to prevent their offending Almighty God before his eyes, as far as his influence can extend, conformable to the rules of discretion ; he is further bound to inspect into their conduct, as far as lies in his power, and see that they discharge their Christian duties.

Men in power should likewise consider that in their public characters they are the representatives of heaven ; and conse-

quently bound by the law not to "make use of weights and weights, measures and measures:" that is, not to act with the least degree of partiality; but do justice to every man without favour or affection. Thus, and thus alone, you fulfil the law, by fulfilling it in the order and manner prescribed by the law. But instead of observing the law in this Christian-like manner, the great bulk of people scarcely ever think of the particular obligations they necessarily lie under from their different states. Hence it follows that the law remains unfulfilled, and they become liable to the justice of God, and the everlasting punishments he has decreed against all the guilty transgressors of the law.

From what has been said, we are all bound to draw some just inference for the future government of our lives; for this sermon will rise up in judgment against you unless you derive some advantage therefrom. The Spirit of God directs you in making this inference: "fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the business of every man." The great and important business for which we all came into life, was truly to fear God, to love him and keep his commandments, and observe his holy laws. To observe his holy laws is in one word the whole duty of man. But how far have we discharged this duty hitherto? Who, or where is he that can say, as that virtuous youth mentioned in the Gospel said unto our Saviour himself, that he had kept the commandments from his very infancy? In this particular we must all be silent—instead of assuring Jesus Christ that we observed his laws from our infancy, very few of us can scarcely assure him that any one day passes over without some remarkable transgression, some gross violation of the divine law.

The more unhappy we are by our frequent transgressions, the more necessary it is to call this day on the Lord for mercy, to deplore our past transgressions of the law in the bitterness of our hearts; to entreat forgiveness, and to ground this application on a firm, lasting, solid resolution, to fulfil the law faithfully to the last period of our lives. Almighty God commands you to act in this manner; and he offers you his all-powerful assistance in the performance of these salutary purposes. His mighty hand he stretches out in aid of feeble human nature. He invites, he calls, he longs to see his strayed sheep return. All the endearments of love he uses for your conversion, for he is the God of love; but beware how you slight them this day, lest you might feel him "the roaring Lion of Israel." Eternal happiness he promises to all those who fulfil the law; at the same time he denounces eternal

misery, eternal pain, against all those who refuse fulfilling the law, and obeying its precepts. Remember, and let it sink deep into your minds—remember it is a God who promises; a God who threatens. What God promises he certainly will fulfil, he must fulfil; because he is essentially true to his word; essentially true to his glory and honour. What God threatens must also necessarily come to pass; because his justice is supported by inconceivable power; and this justice can never be appeased, the time of mercy being once expired. The term for mercy is this life. To you or me this life may end this year, or perhaps this week. These are awful motives for conversion. Is it possible to exhibit stronger incitements, than heaven on one side with all its joys, and hell on the other with all its torments? The one confers all that is desirable—the other entails all that is dreadful. The one is the glorious reward of all those who observe and fulfil the law—the other, the terrible punishments of all its guilty transgressors! “Keep therefore, the law, and the law will keep you;” the Holy Spirit says so; but how?—It will protect you from the anger of God in the last day, the day of wrath; it will save you from the lake of fire and brimstone; and put you in possession of the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

SERMON II.

ON CONFESSION.

“Go, shew yourselves to the priests; and it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed.”—*ST. LUKE, c. xvii., v. 14.*

NOTHING could be easier for our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, than to grant, without limitation or restriction, the prayer of the ten lepers, mentioned in the Gospel whence I have taken my text, who earnestly entreated his pity and compassion. Yet it appears, that instead of granting their request, as he usually did, on the first application, he was pleased to send them to the priests, whose function it was, under the Mosaic law, to judge of those that had been cured of the leprosy, that they might, after such cure, be incorporated with the people, and restored to all the privileges and occupations of social life. Jesus Christ would not cure them until they had set forward towards the place to which they were directed: “as they went they were cured.”

Whence proceeds a conduct so singular, so unusual in our Lord? As every action of his life had some great object in view, this surely was intended to prepare the way for the

acknowledgement of that power in his ministers, whereby we are cured of a much more dangerous disease than the leprosy of the body, I mean the leprosy of the soul by sin. That judiciary power vested in and exercised by the Levites in the Old Law, was but a figure of that power which Christ Jesus has vested in his Church, and delegated to her pastors, to examine the maladies of the soul, and cure them.

The priests of the New Law, St. Chrysostom says, in his third book upon the priesthood, have not only a power of judging of the cure, as in the old dispensation, but likewise of curing the very soul from all the disorders of sin. This power they exercise in the tribunal of Penance, where, on the part of God, they daily grant the forgiveness of sins to such as present themselves after due preparation, with the necessary dispositions of conscience. The sacrament of Penance or Confession, instituted by Jesus Christ, and which is productive of such wonderful benefits to the world as to raise sinful man to grace and friendship with his Maker, is by a licentious depravity rejected as a mere machine of human invention. Whilst many are unacquainted with its virtue and excellence—some neglect—others abuse it. Yes, Lord Jesus ! thy enemies now, as the Scribes and Pharisees of old, spurn at thy favours, and abuse the choicest blessings. They confess thee, Lord, it is true, but not their sins—and false principles supersede thy holy, infallible, unerring maxims. The humiliations of Confession are shocking to them ; but let them be so no longer, O Lord ! for they are thy creatures, the image of thy likeness. Give them docile hearts, and thy servant instructive words, in pointing out Confession as the only road that leads from the death of sin to the life of grace. Come then, my brethren, and attend me in exploring the great blessings that follow a good, and the great evils that follow a bad confession—a sacrament conferring life on the one hand, and death on the other.

In the first place, you shall see that the sacrament of Confession is in itself a fruitful source of sanctification ; and in the second, that by our own faults, we often make it the cause of our own condemnation.

First—All the sacraments in general were instituted for and do greatly contribute to our sanctification ; but not all alike. Some do not confer spiritual life, but only serve to augment and preserve it. Others do confer it, and likewise contribute greatly to preserve it. Now Confession, or the sacrament of Penance, is of this kind. It is the means whereby we obtain the forgiveness of sin, and likewise a powerful preservative

against it. Hence it follows that Confession must be in itself a most particular source of sanctification.

That Confession is the means whereby we obtain the forgiveness of sin, appears from the powers our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ gave unto his apostles, as laid down in the Gospel : "Receive ye the Holy Ghost ; whose sins ye remit, they shall be remitted unto them, and whose sins ye retain, they shall be retained." It cannot be denied, from these words, that the apostles had a power of remitting and retaining sins. Nor can it be denied that this power so conferred has been transmitted by the apostles to their successors in the ministry : otherwise Almighty God would have dealt less merciful by one part of the faithful than the rest, by depriving these of the most powerful means of salvation. This power of remitting or retaining sin, which was conferred on the apostles, and is still subsisting in their successors, could not, nor cannot be exercised but by Confession. For be pleased to observe, that the apostles, in virtue of the power they had received from Jesus Christ, were authorized not only to remit, but also to retain. Now, in order to discharge their ministry properly, it was necessary for them to know when to remit and when to retain ; and this they could never know but by the means of Confession. For by Confession alone could they be informed of the secret dispositions of sinners, the multiplicity and heinousness of their sins, and the sincerity of their repentance ; whence it follows again, that as the power of remitting sins could not be exercised but by means of Confession, Confession must be a means whereby we obtain the forgiveness of sin.

The apostles being men, although endowed with great gifts, still not knowing the state of a sinner by intuitive knowledge, they must be at a loss when to forgive or retain sin, except by the confession or declaration of the sinner ; and hence Confession became an obligation or duty upon all mankind, as all mankind are sinners. The obligation of Confession is anterior to Christianity. Among the ordinances laid down for the people of God, as recorded in the book of Numbers, it is specially ordered, not by Moses the great legislator, nor by any of the prophets, but by the Spirit of God himself. "When a man or woman shall have committed any of all the sins that men are wont to commit, and by negligence shall have transgressed the Commandment of the Lord, and offended, they shall confess their sin." Confession then became the ordinary means that Almighty God had established for the recovery of his grace, after it had been lost by sin : but what

had been only a precept in the Old, was raised to the dignity of a sacrament in the New Law.

We find by St. Matthew how zealous the primitive Christians were in "confessing their sins" after being baptized by St. John in the Jordan; and that zeal which distinguished them in all their religious actions, I wish most earnestly to propose for your imitation. The apostle St. James, addressing the faithful, charges them "to confess their sins to one another." To whom is this Confession to be made? To the faithful, in general; or to any in particular who have no power or authority in spirituals? By no means; the very supposition of such an idea carries absurdity on the face of it. To whom, then, is Confession to be made? Undoubtedly to the ministers of Christ, who received in their ordination, from the successors of the apostles, the power of remitting and retaining sin, in the very same words in which Jesus Christ addressed his apostles: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins ye remit, they shall be remitted unto them; and whose sins ye retain, they shall be retained." To the ministers of God alone Confession is to be made, as they alone possess the power of remitting sin; and that forgiveness follows from confession thus made (the necessary dispositions of the heart always supposed) is further supported by the first epistle of St. John: "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all iniquity." From the authority of the holy scriptures, respecting the institution of Confession and the means afforded thereby to the faithful to obtain forgiveness of sins, it appears to me unnecessary to recur to any other. For your edification I shall just touch upon the constant and universal practice of Christians in every age to confess their sins to the ministers of Christ.

When the light of faith was spreading over the eastern parts of Europe by the labours of St. Paul, it is related in the Acts of the Apostles, that at Ephesus, a considerable city among the Grecian states, all the people of that city, both Jews and Gentiles, being struck with fear at the miracles performed by the power of God, "many of them that believed came confessing and declaring their deeds." Confession then became a necessary consequence of conversion from sin, as at present. The fathers of the Church speak eloquent and forcible of the benefits and necessity of Confession. The profound Tertullian, who lived in the second century, says, "Confession is made at the foot of a priest, that the eternal punishments due to sin may be effaced by this temporal humiliation and suffering." St. Cyprian, who lived in the

third age, assures us, "the faithful confessed their sins, and thereby discharged their souls of the heavy load of their iniquities." St. Chrysostom, who flourished in the fourth century, in establishing the necessity of Confession, addresses one of his own flock in the following manner: "Do not say, I repent in my heart: I tell you (continues the holy father) that is not enough: you must, besides, open your mouth and declare your sins to the minister of Christ, otherwise Jesus Christ could have had no meaning in giving unto the Church the keys of the kingdom of heaven; nor in saying to his apostles: 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins ye remit, they shall be remitted unto them; and whose sins ye retain, they shall be retained.'" St. Augustine, who, after shining as a bright luminary for a considerable time in the fourth century, continued his labours for about thirty years in the fifth, expressly says in his forty-ninth Homily: "To pretend it is sufficient to confess to God alone, is to destroy the commission of Christ, to contradict the Gospel, and to make void the power of the keys; because the keys of the kingdom of heaven which were given to the Church would be useless, and the power of retaining sins would be void, if such sins as exclude from the kingdom of heaven could be readily remitted independently of the keys given to the pastors of the Church.

Hence it appears clearly that sacramental Confession, as prescribed by the Church, has, since the primitive ages of Christianity, been always considered as a divine institution, established by Jesus Christ, enforced by the holy fathers and doctors of venerable antiquity, and constantly practised by the faithful as a necessary means to obtain pardon of the sins committed after baptism.

The necessity existing now that then existed, the obligation necessarily exists also—what the fathers then taught and preached, we now teach and preach; what they urged we now urge; what they declared, we also declare; that Confession (when confession can be made) is the only avenue that leads a sinner to the grace and friendship of God.

Notwithstanding these strong, demonstrative proofs, some may ask, if it may not be a lessening to the supreme power of Almighty God, to have recourse for the remission of sin to any other than God himself? This question could only arise where the principles of religion are weak. The minister, in absolving sin at Confession, acts in the name and by the power of God. It is God alone that forgives, that absolves by the ministry of the priest. To have recourse, therefore, to the means that Jesus Christ has been pleased to appoint for the

remission of sin, can be no lessening to the supreme power of Almighty God. The sacraments in general, which are visible signs, were instituted to confer on man the invisible blessings of grace and forgiveness. Nor was it ever considered that baptism, which was instituted by Christ as a remedy for the remission of original sin, is any way injurious to the divinity.

These are the solid grounds whereon the Church of Christ hath always established the belief of this fundamental point of our religion. Let it be your pride to believe, and by partaking often of the sacrament, reap all the benefits intended to flow from Confession. Let others boast the pretended advantage of lying under no restraint with regard to their consciences, and of accounting for their sins to none but the Almighty God: it is our particular blessing—our inestimable felicity to have a sacrament, which infallibly produces the remission of sins: for Jesus Christ has said so, and what mortal shall presume to contradict him? “Whose sins ye remit, they shall be remitted unto them.” Since the fall of Adam, fallibility, imperfection, and sin, are the sure lot of man: they necessarily flow from a depraved nature, corrupt passions, and the power of our spiritual enemies: when those fall who deny Confession, (and who is he that falls not daily?) what certainty have they of forgiveness after grievously offending Almighty God? They repent in their hearts, they say; and they may think so. But supposing the God of heaven to require more; suppose he requires that not only they repent, but likewise declare their sins to the ministers of Christ, who have been vested with a power of remitting sin, and they refuse to comply with the condition, what hopes can there be of forgiveness in a supposition of this kind? These pleasing and comfortable hopes are and must be derived from the sacrament of Confession or Penance, which Jesus Christ hath instituted not only as a means of obtaining the forgiveness of sins, but likewise as a wholesome and powerful preservative against sin.

To comprehend this rightly, you must know, the sacraments have a double effect. The first consists in conferring or increasing the sanctifying grace of the soul, which makes us agreeable to God, and gives us an undoubted title to the kingdom of heaven: this grace is called by divines, habitual or sanctifying grace. The second effect consists in conferring actual and particular graces, adapted to the end and institution of the sacrament we receive. For Almighty God having intended the different sacraments for different ends, as appears plainly from their number, whereas one single sacrament

might have been enough for the sanctification of mankind, had they not been destined for several and various purposes, these sacraments must necessarily be attended with such graces as are suitable and conducive to their respective ends.

Hence it is the peculiar end of the sacrament of Penance to heal the soul of the deformity and spiritual death caused by sin, and to infuse new life and the full vigour of spiritual health. It follows, moreover, that this sacrament must be productive of the graces necessary to preserve the spiritual life and health acquired thereby; so that a man who confesses properly, not only receives the full forgiveness of his sins, but is likewise entitled, in virtue of the sacrament, to additional graces and assistances, by which he is enabled to preserve the justice and righteousness he acquired in the sacrament.

On this account, Confession has always been looked upon by St. Bruno, Bellarmin, and all the masters of a spiritual life, as the most effectual remedy for curing the weakness of the soul, uprooting evil habits, restraining and subjecting the senses to the maxims of the Gospel, and forming man solidly in the habits of virtue and justice. Besides, all the circumstances attending Confession have a strong and immediate connection with the preservation of spiritual life in the grace of God. For let me ask what greater curb can there be to our vicious inclinations, to our depraved appetites, irregular passions, or the unhappy propensity to vice we are born with, than to know that in Confession we must declare all our sins, our hidden sins, our most shameful sins? the sins of omission as well as commission; of counsel, command, bad advice or evil example; the sins of thought, as well as of words or deeds; the sins that insult the dignity of God by infringing any command, as well as those that injure our neighbour or ourselves: those sins, in fine, we would wish to conceal from mortal eye, and from ourselves also if possible, all must be laid open in Confession before reconciliation or forgiveness can be obtained from Almighty God. The recollection of this circumstance—the awful, candid, full and clear declaration of sin to the minister of Christ in Confession, has alone operated so forcibly, as to stop many from sin at the very brink of temptation.

I cannot dismiss the consideration of the great blessings that flow from the sacrament of Penance, without noticing the many great and heroic virtues which accompany the performance of Confession—the humiliation of the mind, the compunction of the heart, the hatred of sin, the reformation of the soul, and a commencement of a true and supreme love for the Almighty God. These are the previous and necessary

dispositions required for Confession ; which dispositions are extremely capable in their own nature of supporting our natural weakness, and guarding us against the commission of sin ; so that Confession, whether considered in itself, or in its attendant circumstances, is a most powerful preservative against sin. It cures, it heals, it renovates the soul, which by sin had been deprived of the friendship of God and the fellowship of the saints. As in the Old Law, the miraculous pool of Jerusalem possessed the virtue of restoring sick persons to health by immersion, so in the Church of Christ have we a mystical pool, which hath the virtue not only of restoring the soul to, but likewise of preserving it in the full vigour of spiritual life. Should not our thanks therefore be unbounded to the Almighty and good God, for having graciously granted so necessary, so powerful, so divine a remedy to his Church ? How melancholy would our condition have been, were we deprived of the inexpressible advantages that arise from Confession ? Should we not make it our business each day to praise and magnify his holy name for so great and inestimable a gift ? Should we not likewise show our gratitude, by partaking frequently of the blessings that may be derived from this rich, fruitful, and inexhausted source of divine grace ? It happens, however, most unfortunately indeed, that Confession, which in itself is a fruitful source of sanctification, becomes often by our own fault the cause of our condemnation, as will appear by what follows of this discourse.

Second—As in the order of nature, things of the greatest excellence prove most destructive when abused, so do they likewise in the order of grace. Confession, which in itself is productive of the greatest blessings, may become by our own fault the occasion of the most heinous transgressions : for this divine remedy, with all its virtue and efficacy, will not, cannot operate without certain previous and attendant conditions, the want of which deprives it of all its virtue, and even turns it into a deadly poison. These conditions are, Contrition, or a true sorrow and compunction for having offended Almighty God : a full declaration of sins to the minister of Christ, which, according to St. Austin, is a real judgment wherein the sinner acts the part of a witness and judge ; of a witness, by deposing against himself, and of a judge by condemning himself to all the humiliations and severities of Penance or Satisfaction. Now these are the very things people are generally deficient in —because they have not commonly true sorrow and compunction for the sins they are guilty of, and because they commonly make themselves less guilty than they are.

The first essential requisite for Confession is true sorrow for having offended Almighty God ; but this sorrow, to be true, must be supreme and universal : supreme, or exceeding any sorrow that any loss or misfortune in this life could cause. Supreme, indeed, would our sorrow be, if, reflecting seriously on the deplorable condition to which man is reduced, who is deprived of the friendship of God, we beheld the miseries which sin draws on us. So foul is sin, that all the fires of hell and all the sufferings of the damned cannot, nor ever will atone for one sin. Look to this, you who daily multiply and accumulate sin upon sin. Behold what sin is, which made the sufferings of a God necessary to wipe away the crime of Adam ! The enormity of sin is the same this day that it ever was ; it is as unchangeable as God himself, because it is essentially a rebellion against him, a breach of his law, and an insult offered to his eternal majesty.

The loss of God's friendship entailed by sin is so unspeakably great, that a knowledge thereof must necessarily excite a sorrow superior to all other sorrow ; not only because we incur by sin the terrible vengeance of the Lord, but chiefly because we are cast off from his friendship, and every claim to the kingdom of heaven. The loss of health, of fortune, of friends, the attacks of pain and poverty, prisons, and the other calamities of life, which are usually, although improperly, called evils, are of little consideration compared to the only true and real evil of sin. Those are transitory in duration and limited in effect ; these unlimited and perennial, unless wiped away by Penance. If sorrow, therefore, for evil could be proportioned to the extent of the evil, the heart of the sinner should burst asunder, not so much for the unspeakable evils incurred by sin, as the ingratitude of displeasing the great and good God of heaven, our kind Protector, Father and Friend ; from whom we receive all, who constantly supplies all, and from whom we expect all. But that sorrow arising from a feeling sense of our ingratitude, to be valid must be universal. It must not be confined to time, or place, or circumstance. No partial sorrow for partial crimes will satisfy the justice of heaven. It must comprehend and embrace all the crimes recorded against you in the chancery of heaven ; the crimes of youth, manhood, and old age, with a firm deep rooted purpose of amendment, and of forsaking not only those sins you have committed, but detesting all sin, in general, as displeasing and offensive to our sovereign Lord.

A sorrow of this nature, universal and sincere, is necessarily attended by strong and effectual purposes of amendment, and

of suffering any calamity, any loss, even of life itself, rather than offend by transgressing any material point of the law. Without these sentiments and dispositions, there is no forgiveness to be expected in the sacrament of Penance. And this I think is a full and sufficient answer to those who do not blush to say, that the greatest sinners are always sure of meeting with absolution from our hands. No : the Church of Christ never promised any forgiveness, but when a sincere sorrow or compunction was accompanied by a firm resolution of sinning no more. Now let any one of reason judge whether offering forgiveness to such persons as are thus highly concerned for having offended the Almighty God, and firmly resolved never more to offend him, for any consideration, or upon any account whatsoever ; whether I say, offering forgiveness to such persons and in such circumstances be an incitement to sin or an inducement to iniquity ? Or if it be not rather living up to the spirit of Jesus Christ, who, at the same time that he prohibited sin under the severest penalties, was graciously pleased to promise mercy and forgiveness to all repenting sinners ?

It is not necessary that this sorrow and compunction which are requisite for the sacrament should manifest itself by a certain outward sensibility. No ; as sorrow is an affection of the soul it may reside there in its full vigour without breaking out into tears or lamentations. But then this inward contrition of the heart, so essential and yet so uncommon to meet with, besides the continual immoralities in the conduct of many who frequently have recourse to the sacrament, form the grounds of my apprehensions, that the generality of Christians, instead of drawing benefit from this fountain of spiritual life and grace, increase their own condemnation. For all divines agree with the fathers, that no one can be deemed to have a true and sincere contrition for his sins, who continues in the same sinful habits, month after month, and year after year ; because it cannot be deemed reasonable to suppose that a man who was deeply and truly concerned for his sins, and firmly resolved in the eyes of God to forsake his nearest and dearest interests in life, even to lay down his life, were it necessary, rather than offend the Almighty God by any considerable transgression of the law, which dispositions are absolutely necessary for the sacrament, as I have observed—it cannot be deemed reasonable I say, that one possessed of these heroic and Christian sentiments in the heart, should so readily and constantly forget them, and after forgetting, remain fixed, and as it were immoveably settled in the same sinful ways and

practices. But Contrition, however perfect, is but the first step necessary to reap the benefits of the sacrament of Penance. Confession, or a candid humble declaration of sin to an approved clergyman, is also necessary.

Before we can pretend to make a true and full declaration of all our sins it is necessary we know and recollect them. For this purpose we should explore the windings of the heart, and search into the most secret recesses of the conscience, as the Council of Trent recommends, by retiring in private, withdrawing for some time from all worldly occupations, and begging the assistance of the Holy Ghost. There, sequestered from the tumult and busy scenes of life, the Commandments of the Lord should be introduced in regular order as accusers; the commands also of the Church, our respective states and occupations; our duties as parents, guardians, debtors, wives, children, servants; and examining how far each command, each duty, each precept has been fulfilled, neglected, or violated. It becomes, moreover, necessary to examine and search the senses, how far each has gone astray; and to probe the principles, dispositions, and evil desires of the soul.

Thus should a Christian prepare for Confession; holding constantly before him the terror of God's judgments, and his unbounded mercies, the one to excite fear, the other love for the great Sovereign of the universe. Happy is he who behaves in this manner! Do not people generally content themselves with kneeling a few moments in prayer, and collecting what occurs to their minds at that time? "This is all I remember," say they: but Jesus Christ will remember their crimes, and their criminal neglect in preparing for the blessings intended by Confession. How is it possible you should remember more in so short a time? In a few moments how is it possible to recall all the actions, all the omissions perhaps of a whole year? The thoughts you entertained, the desires you indulged, the words you expressed, the duties you neglected, and the obligations you transgressed? No, it is not possible.

If you wish to receive the benefit of the sacrament you must employ a proper time in examining your conscience; as much time at least as you would bestow on an affair of great consequence in the world. A diligent search into your different crimes is not only necessary, because it may be made hastily, timidly, or with distraction; it must be deliberate, and with due consideration. But admitting this search, or examination of conscience, so indispensable for Confession, was diligent and deliberate, still guilt is usually attached to this part of preparation, because people seldom push the examination so far as

they ought; they seldom take in the whole of their obligations. The necessary time in reason and prudence to look into their entire conduct, is not devoted to this branch of preparation, without which this sacrament, intended to convey spiritual life, will surely prove the cause of our condemnation.

Outward and glaring crimes alone usually attract the notice of those who prepare for Confession. Cursing, swearing, drunkenness, or excess, are seen and enumerated; but the secret voices of the heart are overlooked: pride and anger, and their black windings are passed over. The sins of thought, of unlawful desire, the obscene images that fancy delighted in, the motions of jealousy and revenge are all forgotten. Glaring sins alone are brought into account, but the good works they are obliged by the law of God to perform, and which they neglected, they do not inquire into. If they rob, or steal, or cheat, they will, as they should, be sorry for and confess it; but sufficient and seasonable time is not taken to look into other duties equally binding—forgiveness towards enemies, charity towards the poor, assiduity in prayer, respect and attention essentially requisite to the worship and service of the Lord.

They will inquire into the general duties of a Christian, but not into those duties peculiar to their respective stations in life. Thus a father will not accuse himself, either for his neglect in educating his children in the love and fear of God, putting them forward in life, where their morals or their faith are in danger, or the scandalous examples he daily gives them in his private capacity at home. In like manner, a mother will never accuse herself of filling the heads of her young daughters with the vanities and the crimes of the world; nor of teaching them by the fripperies of dress, (which with splendid means may be overlooked) and by novel-reading, the false art of pleasing a mortal, whilst they are left entirely ignorant of all the duties of a Christian. Thus also, a master will never accuse himself of not keeping servants to proper order in his house; of not reprimanding them when they transgress the laws of God; nor of omitting to remind and excite them, and allowing them time for the performance of the obligations of religion. Thus, in like manner, a servant will never accuse himself of doing negligently his master's business; of dilapidating, or wasting his master's substance, or suffering it to be wasted by others. Thus, in fine, the labourer will not reproach himself for prolonging to ten or twelve days, the work which he could perform in six. This is the common way with most part of Christians, whence it clearly follows, they never

declare but a slender share of their guilt to their spiritual judge, and consequently come unprepared for the great sacrament of Confession.

But are there not some who take time to search narrowly into their lives, and survey carefully the whole extent of their obligations? God forbid but there should. Of this description I hope there are many; but even among these there is seldom found that true and sincere sorrow of heart for the sins they are guilty of. It is usual with them to imagine they are reconciled infallibly with God by confessing their sins. No error is more pernicious. Are they truly penitent? If not, what can Confession avail, except to make them more guilty in the eyes of God? If the heart be not truly changed and reformed, so as to renounce sin; if you be not disposed to sacrifice your life, or a thousand lives, rather than return to your sins any more; the minister may pronounce the sentence of forgiveness over your heads, but the Sovereign Judge above, seated on a throne of anger, will reverse his decree, as St. Cyprian observes, and turn it into a sentence of reprobation. For, though the sacraments contain the merits of the passion of Christ, those merits are not applicable but to such as remove all obstacles proceeding from sin, according to the express declaration of the Council of Trent. Can those be said to remove all the obstacles proceeding from sin, who only forsake sin in appearance? No, the first step to forgiveness, according to St. Peter, is repentance; and repentance consists in being truly sorry for sin, in humbly confessing sin, and of atoning for sin by your future life.

As sincere desire of atoning by penance, or a cheerful acceptance of any temporal calamity from heaven, is that satisfaction which appeases Almighty God for the injury offered him or your neighbour by sin, and is essential to the sacrament, you are not only bound to cut up by the root the causes of your former transgressions, but to fulfil such penance as the minister of Christ is bound to impose on you. Those vices, or habitual sins you are most subject to, should give place to virtues which stand in direct opposition to them. The habit of cursing and swearing should give way to adoration, and praise, and prayer; of drunkenness and intemperance, to abstemiousness; of immorality, to virtue; of passion to meekness; of fraud, to charity; of irreligion, to prayer; of incontinence, to chastity; and in general of vice, to virtue. These are the conditions necessary to validate the great power given by Christ to his Church to remit sins; and where these conditions, I mean these necessary dispositions of inward contrition,

attended by effectual purposes of amendment, are wanting, then every confession becomes a sacrilege, that is, a horrid profanation of the most holy things in religion, which are the precious and inestimable fruits of the blood of Jesus Christ. May not this be the case with each of ourselves in particular; at least with many of us? Let those, therefore, look into themselves who continue whole years, perhaps their whole lives, in the same evil habits of fraud and injustice, intemperance and lewdness, public usury or oppression. Let those likewise look into themselves, who, in their dealings, follow certain practices which are always attended with sin in the execution, since the end can never be attained without being plainly accessory to corruption or perjury. They go, and are deemed to go, to the sacraments many times in the year. But do they go with a firm and effectual resolution of laying aside those sinful practices that are evil in themselves and evil in the execution? If they do not, it were much better for them never to approach the sacraments of the Lord; because instead of receiving thereby the forgiveness of their sins, they only add crime to crime, and iniquity to iniquity; which crimes and iniquities will certainly end at length, if they do not reform, in their eternal perdition.

I charge you, therefore, this day, on the part of Almighty God, not to deceive yourselves, nor be deceived by others. I charge you to confess your sins: to confess them in the dispositions I have laid before you, as prescribed by religion: with true compunction or sorrow of heart; an effectual, sovereign, supernatural, universal sorrow; a sorrow superior to all other sorrow, and accompanied by a determined purpose of amendment; then you may confidently look up to your Saviour, who will say unto you, "Have confidence, child, thy sins are forgiven thee." Grant us at all times, Lord Jesus! and especially in the moment of death, to hear these words from thy mouth, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON III.

ON A HABITUAL STATE OF SIN.

“Jesus saith to the man who was ill of the palsy, rise up, take thy bed, and go into thy house: and he rose up and went into his house.”

MATT., c. ix., v. 6, 7.

GREAT, indeed, were the emotions, and lively the transports of joy, which the sick man, mentioned in the Gospel, must have felt on seeing himself miraculously cured. After languishing for many years in a paralytic disorder, confined to a bed of sorrow, unable to assist himself, he caused himself to be brought before Jesus Christ; and as soon as he appeared before the Saviour of mankind, so soon was he restored to perfect health. The restoration of health and the removal of his complaints, were alone sufficient to crown his desires, and fill his heart with delight; but they were insufficient for the charity of a God: he not only cures this happy man of a grievous malady which affected his body, but grants him besides, by his own divine lips, the full remission of all his sins; “Son, be of good courage, thy sins are forgiven thee.” Had Jesus Christ suffered him to remain in his sins, the restoration of his health could have been but of little consideration; but to forgive all his sins and restore him thereby to the spiritual health and sanctity of soul, at the same time that he cured him of an inveterate and mortal distemper of body, was the greatest favour, the highest mercy Jesus Christ could bestow.

These were words of the greatest consolation, and capable of raising the admiration and astonishment of those that heard him. But what is observable in the poor sick man, as we read in the Gospel, is, that he was sensible of his misery, so far as to employ the only effectual method of relief—an immediate and humble application to Jesus Christ. This poor, sick man, full of infirmity and full of sin, feels and knows his lamentable situation. He applies for relief, where he knew relief only was to be found, from the Redeemer of mankind, and he obtains it. But how far does this principle prevail among the degenerate Christians of our days? Although many of them are sick of the palsy, or languishing in a state of habitual sin, according to the explication made of this passage by the fathers and doctors of the Church, yet very few are seen to address themselves properly to Jesus Christ for his holy grace, to enliven, strengthen, and invigorate their souls. Truly paralytic in the eyes of the Lord, they take no pains to obtain their recovery; and what is of equally bad consequence, they seem to have no apprehen-

sion for the dreadful situation in which they live. By the terrible judgments of heaven those wholesome fears or apprehensions, which always afford hopes of conversion, are far removed from those who live in a state of habitual sin. Blindly and insensibly they rush on through life in the gratification of animal sense and corrupt passion ; having eyes they see not, ears they hear not : for thy grace, O my God ! seems far removed from them.

Once more, O Lord ! we pray thee, open their eyes and their ears, that seeing they may behold the dangers that encompass them, and hearing, that they may hear the words that I shall speak. Deeply let them sink in their minds, that, meditating on them, they may produce the fruits of a sincere conversion. For my intention is to awaken your fears by exhibiting to your view the evils that surround you, and the dreadful precipice ready to receive you. In a word, I wish to convince the sinner, that should he continue his wicked course of life, eternal perdition will surely be his lot. The consideration of any subject which involves an infinite, eternal evil, must at all times be momentous, but particularly when this evil becomes by habit a species of necessity ; for—

First—The habit of sin makes us at length entirely slaves to sin ; and,

Secondly—The habit of sin debars us of all the mercies of the Lord.

First—No slavery or subjection is so great as that to which man is reduced by the habit of sin, because then he sins with necessity and seeming security. Sinning by necessity is the natural consequence of the habit of sin, because every habit (it is the observation of St. Austin) becomes in the end a second nature. You all know from experience that nothing can be more deeply rooted than the natural affections of the soul. The sentiments we are born with always reside in our hearts. They may be restrained and checked, but they never can be entirely suppressed. In like manner, every habit which turns at length to a second nature, necessarily draws along with it an influence on the soul, extremely great. If this be the certain consequence with regard to habits of any kind, it is much more certain with regard to any sinful habit, wherein two powerful causes unite to subdue the soul and enslave her affections—the effects of custom and concupiscence. Were man born indifferent to evil, the frequency of sinning alone would tyrannize over his heart, and bring it under the greatest subjection. From the bare consequence of custom, the commission of sin would become as familiar as any one of the

functions of nature. But what influence must a habit obtain, which is supported and strengthened by the most violent inclinations of man, and sanctioned by custom? Truly it must then exert a lasting, universal, and almost irresistible sway. Now this is manifestly the case in respect to an evil habit, born as we all are not only in sin, but possessing by nature a strong inclination or proclivity to sin.

This strong and violent inclination to evil, which divines call concupiscence, is one of the penalties entailed upon the guilty race of man in consequence of the disobedience or prevarication of the first and universal parent of mankind. As it is a punishment of the guilt of our first parent, it must affect all those who have shared in his guilt—the whole race of man. This concupiscence it is that continually urges us on to sin. The darkness it creates in the understanding makes us often mistake a real evil for an apparent good. The violent affections it raises in the heart, make us seek for unlawful gratifications; and frequently content ourselves with a false if not criminal felicity. Its influence is not indeed insurmountable, but very hard to surmount. Even to check it requires our utmost vigilance and care; and to subdue it constantly, the most consummate virtue. Its attacks are no sooner resisted than renewed. Like a powerful and malicious enemy who lays hold of every opportunity to destroy us, and is so strongly bent on our ruin as not to be deterred even by repeated defeats from the prosecution of his destructive designs.

Too fatally successful is our inborn, domestic enemy, concupiscence, upon the peace and happiness of man; for it shakes the life of man with desires, pursuits and enjoyments, strong, eager, and tumultuous; or with violent storms, with few intervals of calm or sunshine. Of this evil St. Paul complains when he cries out, "I feel a law within me always acting in opposition to the law of reason, the law of sin. It is this tyrannic law that hinders me from doing the good I would fain do, and urges me to the evil I would not willingly commit." If the chosen friend of God complains thus, he who lived in times when regularity of life, piety and virtue distinguished the faithful, as Tertullian assures us, what melancholy ideas must occur to our minds on a comparison with those unhappy times, when licentiousness and vice are made lawful by impunity, and honourable by custom; when "desolation hath overspread the whole face of the earth."

By the evil operation of concupiscence, the heart of man is engaged, and seems filled with the honours, riches or pleasures of this life—the honours, than which nothing can be

more vain or despicable in the view of reason, as they neither give, nor add to real merit; but serve to enlighten faults by exposing them to view; besides, being usually distributed by caprice or favour, they often fall on the most worthless and undeserving:—riches, the armour of sin, which are so far from conducing to happiness that they are usually the greatest obstacle thereto, inasmuch as they cannot be acquired without great labour and pain, possessed without care and solicitude, or lost without grief and affliction:—pleasures, or the gratification of sense, which have no other effect than to debase the mind, impair the constitution, banish peace and quiet, and fill the heart with bitterness and remorse: and whose mortal taste grows into desire, desire into use, use into practice, practice into custom, and custom into habit. If, therefore, this inward concupiscence be not restrained or opposed, but on the contrary, constantly indulged or gratified, is it not plain it must at length obtain over all our actions an influence scarcely to be controlled.

This concupiscence, my brethren, is the hidden source and secret spring of that slavery or subjection to sin, which is so discernible in all hardened or habitual sinners. Frequently are we astonished to behold a person endowed with reason, and informed of the principles of Christianity, resigning himself to, and living contentedly under, the empire of the most brutish and shameful passions. But our astonishment would cease, did we but consider the uncontrollable power, the in-born corruption of nature which must obtain over the heart and affections of man, when strengthened by custom. From the united force of these concurrent causes, it is clear man under such dominion must be reduced to a perfect slavery, and a real necessity of committing sin. For St. Paul says, “Do not you know that you become subservient to whatever you obey, righteousness or sin? If righteousness you obey, you are subjects to righteousness: but if it be sin, you are slaves to sin.” However great the slavery to which man is reduced by the habit of sin, it must be acknowledged it never is so great as to deprive him of liberty, and reduce him to an absolute and unconquerable necessity of doing evil. But it is this liberty, as St. Bernard justly remarks, that adds to his misfortune. For if from the influence of inveterate habit, a sinner were entirely deprived of his liberty, he could no longer sin, nor consequently appear guilty in the eyes of God. But because the most inveterate habit neither does nor can destroy, but only lessen and weaken in a high degree, the liberty of man, two things necessarily follow: the first, that we always

sin as often as we comply with an evil habit ; and the second, that under the dominion of habit, more especially if that habit be evil, it is almost impossible to resist it.

Under the influence of any evil habit, however deep-rooted, however strong, we always retain liberty enough to decline, but not strength enough to conquer, sin. Guilty then must we be, as often as we comply. But the power we retain of not committing sin, is so strongly opposed and so greatly weakened by the evil habit we labour under, as generally to remain useless and ineffectual. And this may be clearly seen from daily experience. For nothing is more common than to hear people that are engaged in a vicious habit declare, when pressed by the ministers of Christ to shake off the chains of sin, to alter their course of life and return to the Lord—nothing, I say, is more common than to hear them declare they would if they could, but that it is not in their power to do so. Let the most zealous man upon earth press a drunkard to lay aside his intemperance, and live up to that sobriety the law requires ; his answer is, that though he purposes frequently to do so, still he cannot avoid drinking, and drinking to excess. Those that are addicted to the unlawful gratification of the senses, will tell you they cannot uproot this propensity from their hearts. Men of pleasure, of defamatory tongues, or idlers, are so far lost to a sense of duty that their different occupations are forsaken, their obligations suppressed, by the bent of their evil habit. One who has given himself the custom of swearing, cursing, and blaspheming, will swear, curse, and blaspheme, even when he does not mean so to do : so great is the power of custom, and so great is the influence of every evil habit on the mind !

Dreadful should that situation appear in the eyes of a Christian, wherein he is brought under the necessity of continually transgressing the divine law, because very little hopes can remain for the salvation of one under circumstances of this kind. The great benefit to be derived from a reflection of this kind is, to dread falling into a habitual state of sin more than all the misfortunes upon earth. The misfortunes of the earth are loss of health, fame, or fortune ; and its scourges, wars, plagues, and pestilence : these as well as those being seen and felt, may be avoided or retrieved ; but evil habits draw a veil over the understanding, and obscure from its view equally the evil it creates, as the good it withholds. Should you at any time have the misfortune to transgress the divine law, through frailty or surprise ; take care not to remain in that sinful state, but return quickly by repentance unto the

Lord your God ; for by remaining any time in sin, you will soon renew it ; and by renewing, the habit will soon be formed ; and when the habit is once formed, you become fettered and a slave to sin. In such a situation you will certainly experience that you frequently sin through a sort of necessity, and what is still worse, with the utmost security.

Whilst a sinner retains the fear of God, and has some apprehension of his most dreadful judgments, there remain always some hopes of salvation ; because the fear of God being an active principle, it may one time or other operate with success. Wholesome reflections, a pathetic sermon, some unexpected misfortune, the prudent advice of a zealous friend, have frequently stirred up sinners, not entirely lost to the fear of God, to a true and sincere repentance. But where this inward principle is entirely destroyed, or weakened to an imperceptible degree, there the prospect of amendment, if any, can be but very small. "The fear of the Lord," says the royal prophet, "is the beginning of wisdom ;" and consequently of all righteousness. If therefore this fear be wanting, which is the commencement of the heavenly wisdom that inclines our minds to God, it is plain nothing but eternal perdition can ensue. Now, the immediate and necessary consequence of a sinful habit is to destroy the fear of God within us ; to leave us no apprehension of his justice ; but, on the contrary, to fill our minds with the most daring and criminal presumption. For every man in a confirmed habit of sin, says, like unto the impious man in holy writ, "I have sinned ; and what evil hath befallen me?" The extraordinary bounty of God, who only spares him as yet to give him time to repent, makes him imagine he has nothing to fear even for the time to come. What should be unto him, then, an incitement to conversion, namely, the excessive bounty and forbearance of the Lord, is the very thing that encourages him to run on quietly and resolutely in his wicked courses of life. At length he arrives to such a point of insensibility, as to have no other concern upon him than to gratify himself continually with the most sensual employments ; like those wicked and hardened wretches mentioned in the Scriptures, who said, "Let us live cheerfully to-day, for to-morrow we must die."

Sometimes the Almighty, to rouse this man from his mortal lethargy, is pleased to employ the severity of his justice ; but all in vain—his heart is grown so hard as to feel no apprehensions even of divine vengeance. No examples, no forbearance, no invitations can operate. Amidst the most flaming expressions of the wrath of God, he stands as unmoved

and unconcerned as Pharaoh did amidst the terrifying prodigies wrought by Moses in Egypt. All the great principles of religion are entirely banished from his mind—the love of God, the fear of his judgments, the desire and hopes of eternal happiness. He fears nothing, expects nothing, looks for nothing; at the very time that he has everything to fear, to expect and look for. He lives in the greatest security in the midst of the greatest dangers; but the false tranquillity he enjoys is of worse consequence than the most furious storms: for the apostle St. Paul assures us, “when sinners think themselves most in safety, it is then sudden death and destruction shall rush down upon them.”

This surely must be the case: for the Lord, if slow, is equally sure in dealing vengeance as showing mercy. Danger is never greater than whilst it remains unperceived: the storm that is seen gathering at a distance, may be guarded against; but that which suddenly and unexpectedly bursts over our heads must carry death and destruction along with it. What can be more certain (St. Bernard asks the question) than that man must perish who neither feels nor fears the fires that kindle and burn around him? Now this is precisely the situation of every man in a confirmed habit of sin, as he rests every moment in the arms, and reposes on the brink of destruction, without so much as perceiving it. The sinful dispositions he lives in are the very source of his eternal perdition: yet they appear no way dreadful in his eyes. He runs on gladly and giddily in the flowery walks of iniquity, without considering that every step leads him on precipitately to everlasting ruin. Much like the Egyptians, who in their fiery resentment were bold enough desperately to pursue the Israelites into the Red Sea; but were no sooner entered, than the waters, which before stood miraculously suspended on either side, rushed down upon their heads and overwhelmed them all in one common ruin. Thus it is a sinful habit that brings us under a necessity of transgressing the divine laws, and reduces us to the greatest insensibility in sinning; from which we have a right to conclude, it enslaves us to sin. Is not this the most dreadful situation a Christian can fall into? But how many, perhaps, in this congregation who have already fallen into this dreadful situation? Some of you, perhaps have for many years past led a life of continual sin against the Lord, whereby sin became habitual. Habitual sin, you have seen, tyrannizes over our faculties and enslaves us to sin—it does more, it debars us of all the mercies of the Lord, as we come now to consider in the second part.

Second—Of all the evils to which human nature is subject, none is so lamentable as that arising from a state of habitual sin. Sin, however enormous, if casual or temporary, may, by penance through Christ, be blotted out; but to sin by custom or habit is, in some measure, to shut out the mercies of the Lord, to defy his power, and relinquish all claim to life everlasting. It is very consistent with the character of man, to return by ingratitude and insult the tender mercies of the Lord: but it requires other expressions than I know of, to convey an idea of the folly of such conduct, in relation to the evils it necessarily draws upon man himself. Almighty God, you shall see, is constantly watching and studying to make man happy, by withdrawing him from sin; but sinful man will not accept of happiness from the bounty of God, but lashes at the hand stretched out to receive him.

Master as he is of all his gifts, Almighty God distributes them, when, where, and in such proportions as he thinks fit: "I will be merciful to whom I will." Some sinners there are who abandon the Lord, but whom the Lord never abandons. This is clearly expressed by the royal prophet, when he says—"The Lord is always near unto and round his own people. He is with them to-day; he will be with them to-morrow; he will be with them for ever and ever." Notwithstanding their obstinacy and malice in resisting his calls, and persevering in ways highly offensive to the Divinity, yet Almighty God never ceases to look upon them with a propitious eye, and protect them as it were under the shadow of his wings. The more unworthy they prove, the more the Almighty takes pleasure in showing them the greatest mercies; not because they deserve any, but because he is the God of all mercies. Like the good shepherd, he seeks, he pursues them the moment they go astray; never rests until he finds them, and after finding, puts them on his shoulders, and brings them back triumphantly to the fold. When most strongly, most fully resolved and determined upon their own destruction, it is then the infinite bounty of God interferes and resolves to prevent it: for on the very brink of the precipice, he is pleased frequently to stretch forth his all-saving hand, to prevent their falling, or perishing in the fall.

Such was the dealing of the Almighty towards Peter the apostle and first bishop of his Church: for although he had the misfortune, in the hall of Pontius Pilate, of denying his Master, our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, with all the aggravations of guilt that could accrue from horrid curses and profane maledictions, yet he had no sooner denied him, and

incurred by the act the just anger of heaven, than mercy issued from the tender looks of Jesus, and pierced the heart of Peter ; his soul then became filled with the deepest sorrow and compunction, as shown by his retiring and bursting forth into floods of tears, as the Gospel informs us, and lamenting with emotions too big for utterance the infidelity he had been guilty of.

Other sinners there are, who abandon God, and whom in turn God likewise abandons,—but only for a time. Although he withdraws from them in fact, he only withdraws to a certain distance. Insensibly he draws nearer and nearer, and never ceases to impart his holy grace, until he brings them on to a thorough sense of their duty. He does not subdue their hearts at once, and if I may be allowed the expression, storm them by strong victorious and unresisted strokes of mercy. This would be destroying that liberty, which, as I have observed elsewhere, is the special privilege of man, and by which alone God will be served. But then he is continually enlightening their minds, moving and inciting their hearts, until by slow and regular, but sure advances, he becomes entirely master thereof. Such was his conduct towards David the king of Israel. That prince, in a moment fatal to his innocence, became guilty of two very heinous sins—adultery and murder. Undoubtedly it was in the power of God to convert him the very moment he had sinned. But this he was not pleased to do. On the contrary, he suffered him to remain many days in his sins before he directed his prophet Nathan to reproach the king with his crimes, and make him sensible of his errors, and disobedience to the Lord. No sooner was the king made sensible of his crimes, than he cried out for mercy—and mercy he obtained. Thus has he behaved towards the Jews, who almost constantly provoked him by their rebellions and infidelity, to withdraw all his graces ; yet as often as they turned their hearts with sincerity to the Lord, so often in mercy did he receive them, and deliver them from the sword and chains of their enemies, which the just anger of heaven had let loose upon them, in punishment of their crimes.

Let us look farther, and we shall see other sinners who abandoned God, whom God likewise abandons, almost entirely, almost for ever. I do not mean to say that ever the Almighty God abandons even the greatest sinners, so far as to refuse them all sorts of divine grace or assistance. No : this would be destroying the brightest attribute of the Lord, his goodness ; for were this the case, the law would become entirely impracticable, violent temptations insurmountable, and eternal

perdition unavoidable. Were this the case, thousands there are of our brethren and fellow-Christians upon earth, who could not pronounce the very first words of the Lord's prayer with any expectation of mercy, nor call upon their Creator by the tender name of Father, as Jesus Christ directs and commands all the faithful indiscriminately to do. All sound divines are united in opinion, that the greatest sinners are never deprived at least of the grace of prayer. But what I mean to say is, that there are some sinners whom God abandons so far as to deprive them of all the special graces and assistance of heaven; those graces that render it easy to subdue their passions, conquer temptation, and fulfil the most difficult points of the law.

Of all those whom God thus forsakes, none are more remarkable than habitual sinners; none whom his judgments and visible reprobation more clearly mark out as objects of future vengeance, by suffering them to grow hardened in sin, and, clothed with sin, to descend into the grave. "O why will you die," the Lord cries out; but he cries in vain, for the habitual sinner, in rejecting the mercies, despises the threats of the Lord his God: but when the dream of life is over, he in turn shall cry out, but cry in vain, for the Lord shall be deaf to his cries for ever and ever. All this is clearly laid down in various places in holy writ; thus we read in the fifty-first chapter of the prophet Jeremias, "We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed; let us forsake her." O how dreadful is that separation which is made between God and the sinner! Thus again we find the Holy Ghost speaking by the prophet Isaias, in the fifty-fifth chapter, "Seek ye the Lord while he can be found, invoke him while he is near unto you." From these passages it plainly appears, that there is a time in which the Lord is not to be found; a time in which he withdraws his grace from us, and consequently a time in which he does in reality abandon us. Jesus Christ says likewise in the Gospel; (listen all you sinners, and while you listen, tremble :) "You shall seek me and you shall not find me; you shall die in your sins." But who are they whom the Almighty God abandons in this manner? Those that live in a habitual state of sin. For be pleased to observe—the observation is of great importance for you to reflect on, that as in the principles of religion no one action we perform in a state of grace and from an inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but procures us, in virtue of the merits of Christ, an addition or augmentation of grace, so likewise there is not any one sin we commit but produces a diminution or deprivation of grace.

I have often before told you this truth, verified by the mouth of Jesus Christ : "He that hath shall receive more ; but he that hath not, shall even lose what he hath."

If therefore from every sin we commit a privation of grace necessarily ensues, what privations, what losses must follow from multiplied heaped up sins, and repeated daily transgressions ! Think on this betimes, you drunkards, swearers, slanderers, voluptuous and worldly men ; reflect how miserable must your situation be who spends years upon years, perhaps your whole lives, in iniquity and dissoluteness ; in a continual and open violation of the laws of God. People living in such depravity as I have mentioned, to whom sin is familiar and habitual, must they not at length be reduced to the greatest want of divine grace and assistance ? In this deep want of divine grace and assistance, what clouds of darkness must hang over the mind ! what corruption, what dissoluteness must eternally rule the heart !

"The light shall be taken away from the impious," the Holy Ghost declares in the thirty-eighth chapter of Job : that is, the light of grace, which before enlightened their minds, shall be extinguished, or at least shine so faintly as to make little or no impression thereon. "My own people would not hear my voice," says the same eternal truth, complaining in the eightieth psalm of King David ; but observe the consequence, "for which reason, I have given them up to the corrupted desires of their hearts ; henceforth they shall walk in ways of their own invention." This, indeed, is not only dreadful, but the most dreadful punishment an offended God can inflict ; because all other punishments are not inconsistent with, but rather conducive to eternal happiness. Whilst the Almighty visits us with his holy grace, the greatest hardships we can endure may become profitable unto our souls. Under the heaviest strokes of adversity, we may, and often do, become agreeable unto God, so long as he is pleased to favour us with his holy grace. But when once we are deprived of grace, there can be no prospect of eternal happiness.

The loss of grace, therefore, is the only thing that should properly be called a punishment, or accounted a misfortune. This loss of grace, and by consequence this heavy punishment and dreadful misfortune, is the usual, I may say the certain punishment of those who live in a habitual state of sin ; as appears more fully from what the prophet Isaias says : "Blind the heart of this people, O Lord ; obstruct their ears, close up their eyes ; lest they may see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts : and lest they

be converted and saved." It is right, indeed, and perfectly equitable, that the Almighty God, who essentially is no less just than merciful, no less jealous of his own glory and honour than desirous of the happiness of all mankind, that he, I say, should not bear for ever the atrocious insults he daily receives from all those who frequently and habitually transgress and violate his holy laws.

It is not my meaning to curtail the patience or the unbounden mercies of the Lord ; but I am as far from deceiving you by stretching them beyond the bounds of his ordinary providence. Resting on this point, I say, that the habitual sinner is an abomination before him, and that his patience has limits. Do not imagine that the great God, who swears by his holy Self he will never suffer the honour due unto him to be given, transferred, or prostituted unto any other, will allow himself to be stripped of that honour by daring sinners, without punishing the audacious and sacrilegious attempt ! No : it is incumbent on the Divinity to vindicate his own glory, when abused by habitual sinners. His slighted mercies must and will at length give way to his inflexible justice. The all-powerful hand which dispensed for many years nothing but blessings the most valuable, must, at length, take up the bolts of divine wrath, and hurl destruction on the guilty heads of all the obstinate, habitual transgressors of his holy laws. He may indeed manifest his vengeance by temporal punishments of various kinds—but the Lord does it in a manner more suitable to his dignity, to his rigour, to his unappeasable anger, and more capable of satisfying his justice—by abandoning his enemies to their own iniquities, withdrawing his powerful graces, and giving them up a prey to the never-ending flames of hell !

To prevent, then, so great and irreparable a misfortune, we are all bound to appease the justice of the Lord by a true, sincere, and timely repentance, whilst time yet remains ; for when the sun of life shall set—"when night comes on no man can work ;" no repentance then, no atonement, but everlasting woes shall reward the sinner. Let all you then who, by habits of blasphemy, injustice, drunkenness, debauchery, lying, or idleness, stand opposed by your lives to the mercies of the Lord, be converted I say unto the Lord your God. He calls, he invites you by my words to forsake your evil habits, and be converted unto him. "O why will you die?" provoked as he is by our repeated sins, as yet he has not forsaken us. As yet he visits us by his holy grace and offers mercy within our reach. But I charge you this day on the part of the Almighty,

not to abuse the call, the invitation to conversion he now holds out, lest by his terrible judgments he should deliver you to a reprovèd sense, to your own corruptions, and to final impenitence. Jesus Christ speaks in the Gospel of St. John : (be attentive) "As there is a little light in you, walk therefore while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you : " the darkness of understanding and insensibility which necessarily follow from a confirmed habit of sin.

This warning which I now give you, is perhaps the last powerful grace which Almighty God will give many of you who hear me. Use it well, then, by returning speedily to the Lord. Guilty as you may be, he is still ready to receive you, to forgive you, to embrace you. The blood of Christ which blotted out the sins of all mankind upon the cross, is still crying out for mercy for you. Do not lose the last prospect of salvation, by resisting continually the graces of God, and abusing his excessive mercies. "The axe is laid to the root : " a few moments perhaps will fell the tree ; and down it goes to everlasting flames. If this be dreadful, as it really is, why do not we take some pains to shelter ourselves from the wrath of heaven ? This wrath cannot be appeased but by forsaking sin, and returning firmly and sincerely unto the Lord. This firm and sincere return unto the Lord cannot be obtained but by a particular grace from the Giver of all good gifts. Let us therefore humbly and earnestly implore this necessary blessing through the merits of Jesus Christ, saying with the prophet, "Convert us, O Lord, and we shall be converted." Dispel the darkness of our minds, by thy heavenly light : soften the hardness of our hearts, by the influence of thy powerful grace ; loosen, and break, and tear asunder the chains that bind and fasten us to the yoke of sin, that we may be able to walk with liberty in the ways of righteousness, to the very last moment of our lives ; and thereby attain the great and glorious reward, thou, O God, hast promised to all those who love and serve thee upon earth—life, joy, and glory in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

SERMON IV.

ON SANCTITY OR GODLINESS.

“Take heed, therefore, brethren, how you walk warily, not as unwise, but as wise men, redeeming time.”—EPHESIANS, c. v., v. 15, 16.

THERE is a prudence of the flesh which consists in studying and pursuing our worldly advantages, without any great regard to the vastly more material interests of our souls, as St. Paul says: “The terrestrial man seeketh terrestrial things:” but there is likewise a prudence of the spirit, which proceeds from, and directs us unto God, as the same apostle says: “The celestial man seeketh celestial things.” This prudence of the spirit, or heavenly wisdom, constantly urges us in opposition to our carnal enemies, “to walk warily—redeeming time;” to be careful in avoiding sin, which leads to death, and to pursue the ways of sanctity or godliness, which lead to heaven. That time is lost, in the Scripture meaning, which is spent in follies or criminal pursuits, and time so lost can only be redeemed by works of justice or godliness. Of this point St. Paul is a brilliant instance. Before his conversion, a formidable conspirator against, and a wicked persecutor of the Church of God: after conversion, “redeeming time,” and atoning for his past sins, by becoming the ablest supporter then living of that Church he before persecuted. “By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace hath not been in me in vain.” Thus spoke St. Paul, from a consciousness of having corresponded by his actions to that sanctifying grace which Almighty God poured into him. His labours he knew were to last only for a time, but the rewards were to have no end. This consideration was enough to support him under all sorts of persecutions, hardships, and trials; under cold and hunger, poverty and distress; under imprisonment and stripes, and sorrows by sea and land, in winter and summer, from friends and enemies. After such afflictions and trials, I say, without such afflictions or trials, which of us could say, as he did, that the grace of God was not in vain in him? The grace of God, which made St. Paul such a miracle of sanctity, we all received; but the ill use we make of this grace, is the reason why it produces not the same effects now as it did in former days. In our infancy the great blessing of instruction, and of being reared up in the true faith, in preference to thousands upon thousands of our fellow-creatures, who by the mysterious judgments of the Lord were left in the shades of infidelity and error, is a most distinguished grace. Still greater is the

grace of conversion, because sin creates such an opposition to grace, that nothing less than the omnipotence of God can remove it. Good thoughts, effectual desires, strong resolutions, are all produced by grace ; as are sermons, instructions, counsels, the various opportunities of knowing God by the sacrifice of the altar, and the homage of the heart. These abundant graces, which would have sanctified the savage of the southern hemisphere, we have most criminally abused. How much reason we have to fear from the justice of God for this abuse of his grace, may be easily inferred from the severity he used to the indolent servant for neglecting to make proper use of the talent he received. In granting us grace Almighty God proposes sanctifying us, or enabling us to lead a just, holy, and righteous life. Of this men in general do not think as they should ; or if they do, they act differently from what they think. Piety and virtue are words of deep meaning—for reasoning, not practice. Be you not “unwise, but as wise men,” in following me with docile hearts, whilst I combat an error of such magnitude, by showing, first, that every man is obliged to lead a just and virtuous life ;—and secondly, that it is much easier to lead a just and virtuous life than people usually imagine. The obligation of virtue, and the facility of virtue form the foundation of what I shall lay before you.

First—As the tree is known by its fruit, so is real virtue known by the effects it produces in the life of man—sanctity and godliness. By sanctity and godliness we are not to understand withdrawing ourselves entirely from the world, renouncing our fortunes or friends, practising very great austerities, or doing other extraordinary things. No : these indeed are frequently the attendants upon sanctity and holiness ; but they do not consist in such extraordinary things. True sanctity and holiness consist in a faithful and constant observance of the law of God. By fidelity on our parts in conforming to this holy law, it is the bounden duty of all to endeavour to attain this sanctity and godliness, as will appear more clear from considering the end of our creation, and the spirit of our holy religion.

The end for which man was created was the glory of God ; “for my glory, I have created man.” The first principles of the Christian religion are, that God made man. For what end ? To love and serve God. This is truly the great and universal end of mankind, which admits of no exception. People of all classes, of every age and climate, without distinction of rank and condition, high or low, rich or poor, great or small, are all universally obliged to love and serve God, by

fulfilling punctually and constantly his holy laws, which in reality is attaining and living in a state of sanctity or holiness. Almighty God could not have created man for any other end. Essentially wise in all his acts, the Lord must have proposed some view to himself in creating man : this view is no other than his own honour and glory, because everything besides is unworthy the Divinity. It cannot be supposed that the God of wisdom could have created man immortal, intelligent, and free, merely to abandon him to the base and grovelling appetites of sense ; to the guidance and direction of his passions, without laying down any rules for his conduct, without recalling his thoughts to, and fixing his affections on the divine source of his existence and intellectual perfections.

A supposition of this kind is repugnant to the very first dictates of natural reason : and yet, however hostile such a supposition may be to truth, reason, and religion, it is the Christian doctrine—I mean the unchristian doctrine—of your modern libertines and sensualists. They cannot conceive why eyes should be placed in their heads, without allowing those eyes to range abroad in quest of gratification however extravagant ; nor why sensuality or animal desire should be restricted or forbidden. Still less will they repress the criminal passions of the mind, grown wild by indulgence. But it is your pride, I hope, as it should be that of all Christians, to subject unto the law as well the senses of the body, as the propensities of the soul. To this were you all called. For this end were you created. To deviate from this end, by brutalizing our noble faculties, and assimilating them to the brute beast of the field, is deviating from the end of our creation. The end of our creation is most rational, most noble—to know, acknowledge, and revere the supreme power of our Maker, by living continually in obedience to his holy laws ; or in that sanctity and holiness of life which is an essential title to the kingdom of heaven. This noble end implies an obligation on our parts ; and this obligation is enforced by precepts, or laws, to which a faithful compliance must assuredly lead to the full possession of life everlasting. On the other hand, where rewards have been annexed to a compliance with the law, and those rewards so grand, so durable, so incomprehensible, it necessarily follows, that punishments should also be annexed to the violation of this law ; and these punishments severe, eternal, and dreadfully horrible. To avoid these punishments and merit those rewards is the great end of our creation. We were all born, not to make fortunes or cut figures in the world, not to indulge but repress appetite, not to mount up to rank or

station by trampling on justice, and setting conscience adrift, but merely to honour and glorify Almighty God, in obeying his laws, and by honouring and glorifying God by such obedience, to sanctify our souls.

The sanctification of our souls by a godly life was the true end for which we came into the world. "It is the will of God," St. Paul says, "that you sanctify yourselves." But has the will of God in this particular been the governing principle of our conduct through life? So far from it, I dare say, that this great and important duty has seldom found a place among your thoughts. "Who is he and we shall praise him," that reflects seriously on the obligation he lies under of steadily pursuing the paths of sanctity and godliness? Look back into your past lives, and see if you have spent one single day in the pursuit of righteousness. Too great an attachment to, or too much neglect of your different avocations, cannot be called the pursuit of righteousness; much less can the criminal practices, or criminal omissions, to which all our avocations are more or less liable. Plays, balls, dress, slander, and novels, form the general occupation of those fair ones on whom in the eyes of men the world smiles. But are these the pursuits of righteousness? Do the smiles of the world draw down the smiles of heaven? Much happier, in my estimation, is that poor, sick woman in rags, who, with humble resignation, lifts up her heart and blesses the hand that afflicts her, whilst she sees her fellow-creature and a lap-dog carried about in stately pomp.

The sanctified works of the law hold no place in the general estimation of mankind: and hence it is, as consequence follows cause, or shadow substance, that the precious time of life is wasted in idleness and vanity, if not in licentiousness and dissipation. That time, granted for the sanctification of our souls, is employed in acquiring and amassing the perishable wealth of this world; but one hour scarce employed in the great end for which alone we were created. When life shall end, when those busy scenes shall pass away wherein men now appear so agitated, of what avail will be all those turmoils and strifes, those cares and troubles, when summoned to the tribunal of Christ to give an account of your administration here below? What answer will you be able to make, when Almighty God shall inquire of you, in what manner you had passed your days upon earth? Whether conformable to the end for which you were created, by honouring God and sanctifying your souls; or in a manner consistent with this deceitful world, and the gratification of

animal sense? Whether to the glory of God, or the dishonour of his holy name? agreeable to the light of reason, or in the most irrational, if not the most scandalous pursuits? I take upon me to say, that there is hardly any one of you but must acknowledge, within his own breast, that he has been going astray almost all the days of his life, and continually declining from the great end of his creation—the glory of God and the sanctification of his soul. “We have been wearying ourselves,” says the royal prophet, “in the ways of iniquity; and continually going astray from the paths of righteousness,” in which we should have walked incessantly from the moment we attained the years of discretion.

A barren knowledge of this truth, unproductive of good, will only add crime to crime. It must be followed by salutary, effectual, decisive resolution. A resolution superior to flesh and blood, grounded on the love of God for you, and the love you should return to your God by a virtuous and holy life. Humble yourselves in the presence of the great Being who made you, who watches, who protects, desires to make you happy in the ways of godliness. Look back on your past errors with sorrow and compunction. Re-enter the ways of virtue you perhaps have long since deserted, and persevere therein to the last period of your lives. For this is a most indispensable duty; a duty incumbent on us all, not only from the end of our creation, but likewise from the very spirit of our religion.

The holy religion you profess has no object in view, in all her ceremonies, sacraments, and most holy sacrifice, but the honour of God and the sanctification of your souls. This is the very spirit of religion—to sanctify the heart, and lead you on in the ways of godliness. The apostle St. John says: “Our religion is holy and unspotted.” To this holy religion have we been called by a particular blessing from God; it is therefore plain we must have been intended for that sanctity and holiness our religion prescribes. This is the argument St. Paul made use of to the primitive Christians, as we read in his epistles: for after exhorting them to walk according to the knowledge they had received of the obligations of Christianity, he directs them to “abound more and more,” or daily make new advances, new improvements in virtue: on what grounds? “Because we are called not to uncleanness, but to holiness:” hence it clearly follows, that holiness is necessarily implied in our very vocation to the Christian religion.

Moreover, by baptism we have been ingrafted into the mystical body of Christ, and made members of “that Church,

or assembly of believers, which Jesus Christ hath sanctified with his blood, that they might be without wrinkle or stain." By this mystical insertion or association with the Church of Christ, we make up a part of "that holy nation, that royal priesthood, that people of acquisition, which Jesus Christ hath purchased with his blood," as St. Paul hath further said. The great pains St. Paul has taken to inform the early Christians of the dignity of their religion, and the manner of their call from the darkness of infidelity and error, wherein almost the whole world then lay buried, was to inculcate strongly into their minds the terms on which that call, that grace was bestowed; namely, by a sanctified and godly life to fulfil the duties prescribed by that holy religion. The same instruction the Holy Ghost this day holds out to your consideration. By a particular mercy have you been called to the fold of Christ, whereof Christ himself is the shepherd or pastor; often have you gone astray by sin; often has he sought and found you, and brought you on his shoulders to the fold. This fold, or family of Christ, is the Church, whereof every member is bound by every obligation to holiness, as I have already laid before you.

Laying before you those obligations to sanctity and holiness required indispensably of every member of the Catholic Church, is not fulfilling the end I have in view, unless you are all firmly convinced of this obligation; because a firm conviction of those obligations is the first step to execute them.

Have you ever before seriously considered the high rank you are all raised to by being members of the Catholic Church, and the duties you are bound to by that rank, which are to fulfil all the precepts of the Church? In place of the Jews, who by their crimes were cast off by the Lord, and as you see them this day a sad spectacle of the prophecies and judgments of the Lord, the outcast of all nations, without either country, or prince, or prophet, or temple, or sacrifice; in their place, I say, have you been ingrafted in the mystical body of Christ, members of his holy Church, heirs to the beautiful tabernacles of Jacob in heaven, an holy priesthood, and purchased by the blood of a God.

Those blessings, those dignities will draw down a double damnation from that Almighty Hand that now cherishes you, unless by a holy and sanctified life—by forsaking your past sins, lamenting them bitterly, and re-entering the ways of justice and godliness, you fulfil the obligations prescribed by religion. Those obligations are so great and

indispensable, that no one is admitted into the Church of Christ who does not solemnly engage to fulfil constantly all the injunctions of the Christian faith, which constitute true virtue and holiness. For this end are sponsors required as sureties, who answer for, and promise most solemnly on behalf, and in the name of children at baptism. Baptism affixes the seal of God upon all Christians, who are ever after bound to fulfil what they then promise, of renouncing Satan and all his works, this wicked world and all its pomps and vanities, with all the sinful lusts of the flesh ; and that they will besides for ever serve Almighty God, and faithfully keep his holy commandments. What is all this but a most solemn engagement to sanctity and holiness? Without this previous and solemn engagement of resisting the seductions of our invisible enemies, and the attacks of our more dangerous domestic enemies—our passions, we never could be admitted into or incorporated with the Church of Christ. Why so? Because sanctity and godliness being the whole aim, the very essence and spirit of Christianity, it were the greatest enormity, the most monstrous absurdity, to receive any one into the Church of Christ, before he publicly and solemnly engaged to lead a righteous and holy life, by fulfilling all the laws and maxims of that Church. For as St. Paul observes, “what alliance can there be between light and darkness; justice and iniquity; the children of God and the slaves of Belial?” Virtue and vice cannot dwell together. We must arise from sin, as Lazarus did from the tomb, and resolutely follow the ways of justice; or in vain do we glory in being members of the fold of Christ, members of his mystical body; and in vain do we look up towards the glorious rewards, the immortal crowns which the Catholic Church points out to our view, and within our reach, in the kingdom of God. As you have seen that, according to the expression of St. Paul, “you have been transferred from the darkness of infidelity to the admirable light of the Christian faith; from iniquity to justice, from the slavery of Belial to the glorious and inestimable liberty of the children of God,” it is incumbent on you in the highest degree to lay aside the works of darkness, and pursue the works of light: to renounce all iniquity and fulfil all justice, to shake off the chains of Belial which now bind you, and live in subjection to God alone.

The great importance of this lesson given by the Spirit of God, (who is God himself,) in the words of St. Paul, appears from this consideration, and think of it every day you live, that your ALL is at stake; not the empty baubles of life, not

its honours, which are smoke, nor its wealth which moulders, nor its pleasures which cloy and vanish ; but immortality, life, and joy immense and eternal. What is more, if you do not forsake sin, which this day on the part of God I charge you to forsake ; if you do not take up a virtuous and godly life, to which the Church this day sweetly invites you by my ministry ; in proportion as the graces poured on you are great, whereby you see the way of life, and yet refuse to enter, so shall the fires below exercise a double vengeance, in satisfying the inflamed justice of an angry God, for the abuse of such graces ! These are truths, my brethren, you seldom dwell upon : and hence arises the deluge of immoralities and vices and profanations, which are at once the misfortune and the reproach of the present age. No matter how black or numerous your sins have been, forsake them this day, and Jesus Christ has his arms extended to receive you. He promises comfort to your souls, and peace in the paths of sanctity. It is possible that some of you have never complied with the duties to which you were bound, since you attained the age of discretion—it is possible that many of you have enlisted under the banners of Satan, by constantly pursuing sinful ways ; the wicked ways of life, its pomp and vanities—it is possible that some of you have never served God, or obeyed his holy laws ; nevertheless, return this day, and mercy, grace, and peace you shall receive. You have the word of God for it, by St Paul : “ Where sin abounded, grace shall more abound.” By grace then we see, and it is grace that teaches us that our whole life has been no more than one continued open violation of the engagements we contracted at baptism.

It is not in baptism alone we take upon us the strict obligations of holiness. The professions we daily make of the Christian faith, in the Apostles’ Creed, necessarily implies the same obligation. St. John says the same : “ Whoever declares he belongs to Christ, is bound in virtue of this declaration to walk as he did.” Very justly he said so ; for what can be more reasonable than that the member should be conformable to the head, and the disciple submissive and obedient to the directions and commands of his master ? Or, can anything be more shocking to common reason, than that a man who professes himself a Christian shall think himself entitled to lead a most unchristian life ? No : he must either renounce all title to Christianity, or renounce all iniquity ; disclaim the Christian name, or fulfil the duties attendant upon it. In a word, every man who declares himself a Christian, should be in reality, as far as human frailty can

admit, a living pattern of Christ; according to what he says in the Gospel: "Be ye perfect, as my Heavenly Father is perfect." Following which idea, St. Paul says: "He that is just, let him become more and more just, and he that is holy, let him become more and more holy." This is a fundamental point of religion, and the very first principle the primitive Christians imbibed, as appears clearly from their conduct, which was so regular in every respect, and so conformable to the laws and maxims of Jesus Christ, that St. Paul bestowed on them the illustrious name or appellation of saints. But what resemblance do we who profess ourselves Christians, bear to Jesus Christ, or even to his first followers? The life of Christ was never stained with the least imperfection, and ours is composed of the greatest crimes, the most heinous transgressions. The life of Christ was all charity and goodness;—ours one continued scene of violence, animosities and dissensions. The life of Christ was all employed in glorifying his Father; ours is all employed in dishonouring his holy name, abusing his gifts, and inverting order. Is this living up to the obligations of our holy religion? Is it not rather offering incense to Belial at the very time we pretend to honour the living God? Whilst our lives and our actions are so widely different from the life and actions of Jesus Christ, how can we call or suffer ourselves to be called Christians? Let us then blush, in a spirit of compunction, at our former infidelity, and begin henceforward to be what we should have been from our entrance into life—true Christians: or, in other words, men of upright principles and holy lives. Remember this is a most indispensable, as well as a most universal obligation: an obligation grounded on the very end of our creation, and the very spirit of Christianity. But how is it possible, you may say, to lead a virtuous and holy life amidst the distractions, dangers, and dissoluteness of the world? It is not to be done without difficulty, I allow; but still I maintain the difficulty is not so great as you generally imagine; and this you will see verified in the second part of this discourse.

Second—To show you that a holy and sanctified life founded on the accomplishment of the law of God, notwithstanding its seeming difficulties and the infirmities of nature, is easy in the execution, must at once be consoling to human weakness, and encouraging to all to commence this life of sanctity. For whatever difficulties occur in the prosecution of the design, and which are always magnified, they must proceed either from rigour in the duties of religion, or weakness in ourselves. Now, I cannot see, in either view, such difficulties.

as you may apprehend in a sanctified and godly life, and I shall endeavour to press my ideas on this important subject as plainly as I can upon your minds.

The duties which religion prescribes, in order to attain a state of sanctity and godliness—that sanctity and godliness which are essential to Christianity, and a sufficient title to the kingdom of heaven, consist only in faithfully observing, and diligently executing the law of God, as appears from the words of Jesus Christ: “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” Now, I pray you, is this a task so mightily arduous as to be deemed almost impracticable in the execution? Many thousands of our predecessors, by faithfully fulfilling the law upon earth, have earned for themselves the glory and happiness they now possess in the realms above. Their rewards should encourage, and their example instruct us how to follow their steps. It is a melancholy truth, and I admit it, that no age, no period of the Christian era has abounded more than the present in iniquity—iniquity overruns the land, and by a strange depravity, vice is reduced to a system, and introduced as a fashion. If you have not heard, I have, the thoughtless beau, the young blood, boast of insulting that God whom he was never seen to adore!

Notwithstanding this general depravity which covers the world, a few there are, and those few consist of thousands, and those thousands are scattered over all nations, who constantly fulfil the holy laws of God. The instances are before your eyes. Our temples bear testimony to their piety; old age and poverty to their charity; and all their transactions to the regularity of their conduct. And what can hinder you from doing what thousands have done, and what several are doing daily before your eyes? Is there any one of you but may very well, with the assistance of divine grace, pay unto the Lord the homage due unto him and his holy name; sanctify the days allotted to his worship; refrain from murder, impurity, and theft; be strictly honest in all your dealings, and strictly true in all your assertions? In a word, is there any one of you but may very well, with the assistance of divine grace, keep the commandments, which is in reality fulfilling the whole substance of the law, and consequently attaining that degree of sanctity and holiness the law prescribes? No doubt you all can: and any doubt upon this question is a wicked suggestion of your mortal enemy, whom you are bound to resist.

It has been impiously said that some of the commandments are impossible to be observed, even by the just themselves,

although they should use their utmost endeavours. But this doctrine, so repugnant to faith, has been censured and condemned by the Church of Christ, as inconsistent with the principles of our religion, and the very notion we entertain of the Divinity. How is it possible to conceive, that our Heavenly Father, who is all goodness by nature, should load his servants here below, his adoptive children in Christ, the purchase of his sufferings, with a burden superior to their strength; and at the same time exact obedience at their hands, under the severest penalties, under pain of being condemned for ever to the eternal fires below? A hardship of this kind would suit the character only of the most cruel tyrant. How, then, can it be reconciled to the infinite justice, the tender clemency of our good God? And yet this clement and just God would necessarily lie under an imputation of this nature, if his commandments, or any one of them, were impossible to be fulfilled. Too injurious to his goodness would be such a reflection. He is the God of justice, and he could not command what we could not fulfil. He has commanded all to fulfil his law under dreadful threats; all therefore can, all are bound to fulfil it by a virtuous and holy life. "Do not imagine," said Moses, "that in order to keep the divine command it is necessary for you to cross the seas, or travel over the continent; or mount up to heaven to fetch down the power of fulfilling it." The power is near at hand: IT IS IN YOURSELF. And Christ, the eternal wisdom of God, tells you, "his yoke is sweet and his burden light." How could these assertions hold true, if his law, which is his yoke and burden, were impracticable, or even over severe? Yet the law appears extremely difficult: but to whom? To your lazy, idle, vicious characters: to those who make the gratification of lawless passion and animal sense the whole object of their pursuits—to men who will not submit to the law, but are always acting in opposition to its holy maxims. It is not surprising that the law of Christ, which is so pure as to condemn every vice, restrain every passion, and check every inordinate appetite of the soul, should appear an intolerable burden, a yoke of iron, unto persons of the most corrupt principles, and the most dissolute lives. Let such people henceforward submit to the law, and do what lies in their power to fulfil it. The grace of God will assist them; and then they will know by experience, how sweet is the yoke, and how light the burden which the law imposes: for Jesus Christ assures them, "Take my yoke upon you, and you shall find rest unto your souls."

No argument I can advance to show that the duties of the law, or if you choose to call them, the severities of the law, form no bar to that sanctified and godly life which I so earnestly recommend, will convince, unless you possess that docility of disposition necessary to receive conviction. The duties of the law present now no greater difficulties than they did at the beginning of Christianity. What the law then was, it is now the same. The same duties it then enforced, the same rewards and threats it then held out—the same it does this day. Eternal as the God that made it: so far, I mean, as relates to this life; for in heaven impeccability will supersede all law; and love and joy will reign for ever.

Now, in what light was the law considered by the primitive Christians, in the early days of religion? Did they consider it presented to them difficulties too great for human nature to surmount? No. Did they capriciously set up their own judgment in determining the equity of the law of God, and seeing some things therein of difficult practice, establish them as grounds, like modern Christians, not only for rejecting the law entirely, but for resisting and opposing that law, by daily practising every crime it condemns? Quite the reverse. So far were the primitive Christians from resisting or opposing the law, or thinking the duties of the law too severe, that by their sanctified and godly lives they edified the Church, as St. Paul testifies, and to the severity of the law they frequently added new severities of their own. For where the law only prescribed a disinterested spirit, or enjoined them to keep their hearts disengaged from the riches of this world, they frequently gave up all they had to be distributed amongst the faithful. Where the law only prescribed a spirit of abnegation, or enjoined them to refrain from every unlawful pleasure, they frequently denied themselves the most innocent amusements, and condemned themselves to continual retirement and mortification. Where the law only prescribed a spirit of fidelity, or an inward disposition and willingness to forego the dearest interests of this world, rather than offend Almighty God, by transgressing any one material point of the law, they frequently courted and embraced the occasion of laying down their lives for the sake of Jesus Christ.

And we shall think it a very extraordinary hardship to do what is barely prescribed by the law. Yet we are Christians; but in manners degenerate, in conduct depraved. We dishonour the name of Christian, so long as we act in a manner unworthy of a Christian, so long as we refuse to regulate our lives by the law of Jesus Christ, who is the Lord and Master

of every Christian. How can that law appear so severe now, in the sunshine and tranquillity of religion, which did not appear severe to the primitive Christians, amidst the most violent storms of persecution? What motives could influence their lives, and inspire them with the most heroic sentiments of religion, that do not still subsist to us? We have the same laws, the same duties to fulfil, the same God to serve, the same rewards to hope and look for, and the same punishments to shun and avoid. Why, then, so much fervour and fidelity in former days, so much remissness and infidelity in ours? If by a comparison with former days, it be astonishing to behold the degeneracy in ours, still more astonishing it is, that those very people who complain loudly of the severity of the law, daily undergo in the world far greater hardships than would be requisite to attain a high degree of godliness. What station in life is exempt from difficulties; unlogged, unburthened with innumerable hardships? What toils, what dangers does not the warrior undergo in the field, in the pursuit of honour? the lawyer in quest of gain? the magistrate in discharge of his functions? the merchant in carrying on his trade? every man, in a word, in his respective profession? I only speak of the elevated and prosperous stations of life. But were I to descend to the subordinate walks of life, Lord God! what toils and hardships, what sorrows and anguish would press on my view! Feuds, dissensions, quarrels, and idleness, unsanctified poverty, pains and infirmity, blow up the tempest of misery which constantly agitates them.

Now if these different orders of men took half the pains in fulfilling the law of God, which they take in violating it, certainly they soon would become eminent in the ways of sanctity; that degree of sanctity I mean which is essential to Christianity, and a necessary title to the kingdom of heaven. Why, then, will you take such pains and undergo the greatest hardships to gain a perishable crown, very often only a blast of fame, and still oftener nothing at all, and take no pains to purchase the immortal crowns of glory that are sure and certain in the kingdom of heaven? Is the kingdom of heaven of less consequence than the kingdom of this world? or eternal joys and glory inferior to the empty, unsatisfying, transitory gratification of sense? Pursue, then, the paths, I again and again charge you, which surely lead by a virtuous and holy life to the kingdom of God. Cast away the mist that obscures from your view the happiness attendant upon such a life; for the difficulties are not so great as you might have hitherto

imagined on account of the duties of religion ; neither can they be deemed extremely severe even on account of our own weakness.

I own the weakness of man is not only great but excessively great ; and experience supports me in the assertion, that it is hardly in our power to know thoroughly our own weakness. Human nature has been so deeply wounded, and so monstrously degraded in all her faculties, by the fall and prevarication of the first and universal parent of mankind, that we have scarcely anything left, but ignorance, weakness, and sin. Since this degradation of human nature the understanding of man is clouded with darkness ; but the evil stands not there—the will is also reduced to the lowest degree of feebleness and inability. From these causes result the greatest reluctance to good, and what is equally deplorable, the strongest propensity to evil.

The saints in all ages have felt and deplored the evil I now speak of. That miracle of divine grace, the great St. Paul, complains bitterly of this evil : “That inward law which rules within us, is always rebelling against the law of reason ; the law of sin, or the impulse of concupiscence (which is the effect of original sin) is continually inciting us to sin.” When we consider human nature in this light, debased and weakened by original sin, we certainly have reason to be extremely diffident of ourselves, and to cry out with St. Paul, “Unhappy man ? who shall deliver me from this deplorable state, this state of intestine war, this state of weakness, misery, and death ?” Besides, it is a point of faith, that of ourselves we can do nothing with regard to salvation. Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, says so : “Without me you can do nothing.” And again St. Paul : “We are not sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves ; but all our sufficiency is in God.”

This, indeed, is enough to sink us to the lowest degree of self-annihilation in the eyes of God. It should, not, however, make us overlook the powerful resources we have on our side in our holy religion. For it is no less an article of faith and an undoubted principle of religion, that with the grace of God, we can fulfil the most difficult points of the law. “I can do all things,” St. Paul says, “in him that strengthens me. Not I alone, but the grace of God with me.” Now great must be that strength, and powerful that ability, which we must derive from the help and assistance of Almighty God. Is there any difficulty so great, but we must conquer with his aid ? No : “If God be for us, who is it that can be against us ?”

This divine grace or heavenly assistance is in some measure imparted unto all : for St. Paul declares : "It is the will of God that all men be saved." Now the will of God must necessarily be effected so far as to supply all with the necessary means of salvation ; namely, with holy grace ; for grace implies every aid necessary for that end. This divine grace or heavenly assistance is imparted in greater abundance to the faithful than to others. The same is laid down by St. Paul : "Christ is the Redeemer of all, but most particularly of the faithful." This divine grace or heavenly assistance, divines say, is always proportioned to the difficulties attendant upon the different stations of life we are called to, and engaged in, under the direction of Providence. Again, this divine grace or heavenly assistance is always augmented in proportion to our fidelity and fervour ; as it is decreased or withdrawn in proportion to our negligence or infidelity : "He that has not," (they are the words of Christ in the Gospel) or, he that has not made the proper use of the grace he received, "shall even lose what he thinks he has : and he that has," or has made the proper use of the grace he received, "to him shall be given more." Seeing, therefore, that with the grace of God we can fulfil the most difficult points of the law ; that this grace is imparted abundantly unto the faithful ; that it is in our power, by a proper application to prayer and godliness, to increase this divine grace, and thereby enlarge our spiritual strength and ability, what excuse can any one plead for not fulfilling the law and attaining that degree of holiness the law requires ? This reflection made St. Paul cry out : "O man ! thou art inexcusable for not glorifying the Almighty God, in the observance of his holy law."

How comes it to pass that Christians feel so little, and experience so seldom, the influence of divine grace ?

This happens either because you resist its influence (for it is in the power of man to resist even the most powerful grace), or because Almighty God, in punishment of your neglect, withdraws his powerful grace, and leaves you only such weak and feeble aids as make little or no impression on the mind or heart. In this situation—mind this, all you languid, lukewarm sinners—in this situation, wherein man appears abandoned to his own weakness, everything seems difficult, everything hard, every temptation is yielded to, and the law remains constantly unfulfilled. Can anything be more dreadful than a situation of this kind ? There cannot, undoubtedly, as it borders on reprobation, and eternal perdition. "If thine eye be dark, thy whole body must be darkened : " if the grace of God doth not

enlighten you, you can have no thought of God, no desire of salvation, no relish for the things of heaven.

The grace of God being then the light of the soul, as well as its strength, and the only thing that can enable us to fulfil the law of God, and thereby attain that righteousness and sanctity which are requisite for life everlasting : it follows, we should dread no loss in this life equal to the loss of his grace, and should resolve on cherishing and improving it by a virtuous and holy life ; and further employ the means religion lays down to augment the influence of grace, by frequent, fervent prayer, works of charity, the sacraments and most holy sacrifice. Using these divine remedies, we shall certainly receive such abundance of divine grace as to make the most difficult observance both easy and comfortable. Covered with this armour of faith, we shall soon learn to resist the most violent temptations, elude all the wiles of the evil spirit, and triumph over all the opposition of hell. Then shall we walk with cheerfulness in the most arduous paths of righteousness, till the end comes of our mortal course, when God shall call in mercy to make us partakers of the high rewards he has promised to all those and to those alone who lead holy and virtuous lives upon earth—the joys and glory of his heavenly kingdom. Amen.

SERMON V.

ON HUMILITY.

“He that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.”—ST. LUKE, c. xviii., v. 14.

OF all the virtues that shined in the life of Jesus Christ upon earth, none is so conspicuous as humility. It seems to be his darling virtue—for from his conception in the womb of his blessed mother to the last moment of his life, he ceased not one instant to be covered with it as with a garment. Observe the obscurity of his parentage, of the manger, of his private life, of his infancy, and the humiliations of his passion. The other divine virtues whereof he is the source, he was pleased only occasionally to disclose : his wisdom among the Jewish doctors—his power at Cana—his bounty in the desert—his charity during his public life : but humility was that virtue which he constantly and uniformly exhibited the most brilliant example of, in his sacred person and actions, for the imitation of mankind—that virtue whereby he wished chiefly to instruct the world : “Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.”

However strong the motives are for the practice of humility, from the example and instructions of Jesus Christ—from a just review of the miseries that overwhelm us—from our own essential insignificance and corruption—from our blindness, our hardness, and insensibility in all those concerns that relate to our supreme and sovereign good, another motive of great magnitude is presented before you in the promise of a God; “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” He, who, of himself, by the co-operating grace of heaven, stoops down and takes up the cross, which our Saviour did before—who, far from repining or swerving from his duties, under the various calamities of life, beholds the finger and acknowledges the wisdom and the justice of God in every circumstance; he, I say, not I, but Christ our Lord says it, “he shall be exalted.” Where? Not in this world; look for no rewards here below: for here he promises nothing to his friends but afflictions and sufferings and sorrows: “You shall weep, but the world shall rejoice.” But he tells them elsewhere, “Your tears shall be wiped away. Your sorrow shall be turned into joy, and your joy nobody shall take from you.” Now, “as the afflictions of this life,” according to St. Paul, “are not to be compared to the glory of the next;” so I maintain that humility being the foundation of a Christian life, the ground and pillar of all virtues to which Jesus Christ especially annexed a promise of exaltation, it follows that humility is a virtue of indispensable necessity, within the reach of each of you, my brethren, and that it gives you the strongest claim to share in his glory, who was the model of humility here below. This I hope to make more plain from a consideration of—

First—The motives that should inspire humility;

And, secondly—The benefits that flow from it.

But vain, indeed, and poor are my efforts, unless thou, O Lord, lend thy aid. Open the understanding of my hearers, that seeing they may see what just causes they have for practising humility. May they sincerely begin henceforward to copy the examples of thy meekness; and grant, O my God, that whilst I lay open the paths of life to those present, I may never mistake the way myself, by neglecting to practise what I proclaim on your behalf to others.

First—The weakness and misery of our nature, and the command which Jesus Christ has been pleased to leave us specially on this head, will appear, I hope, to every thinking person, such strong and convincing motives for the practice of humility, that I need only lay them before you in a plain

and simple manner, to induce you to the practice of that sublime virtue.

Man, originally formed of common earth, inherits from nature the same imperfections as all other animals—want, weakness, disease, imbecility, death, corruption, and then a return to that slime whereof he was composed. Here is no distinction. This is the lot of all—of the great and the exalted, as well as the low and the humble, of the rich as the poor, of the master as the slave, of the king as the subject; all must undergo and feel those various changes, to which the sin of Adam levels them with the brute of the field. Our souls, it is true, raise us beyond all the visible works of the creation; but their noble faculties are obscured and darkened, more prone to error than truth, to vice than virtue. Our souls cannot convey the prerogative they possess of immortality to the body. No: “Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return.” Besides, the time was, a few years ago, when your souls had no existence; for it is the doctrine of the Church, that the soul is created by Almighty God, as soon as the body is sufficiently organised and formed for its reception.

How profound, therefore, and how humble should not the sentiments of every man be, when he considers that a few moments back he had no being at all, and that in a few moments forward, he will lose the life he now has! Must not a consideration of this kind satisfy any thinking man, that his body is nothing in reality but dust and ashes, and that St. Paul was very just in saying: “Whoever thinks himself something deceives himself.” Let no man then say, that this compound of spirit and matter, is endowed with singular excellencies and distinguished perfections. The knowledge of what man was before the fall, should now overwhelm us with confusion. “Little inferior” was he made “to the angels,” as the Holy Ghost speaks in the words of King David; but the sad evils that sin entailed on him, both in soul and body, are of the most lamentable nature; so that now, what people often imagine, and generally call perfection, is frequently no more than vice in disguise. That original probity, that virtue, that clear knowledge and pursuit of good, that unclouded perception, that simplicity of manners, that full possession of unmixed ease and happiness, which made man little less than an angel, when he came from the hands of God, are now, alas! unknown.

Could we but penetrate into the dark foldings of the hearts of those we generally call the greatest and the best of men, Lord God! what sentiments should we not behold? There

we should see, that what we call generosity, benevolence, and true friendship, are no more than the vile counterfeits of vanity, ambition, and self-interest : there we should find those great actions, which attract the applause, and command the veneration of mankind, take their rise from the most corrupted sources of avarice, envy, or revenge !

If this be the case, as it really is, what reason have the most exalted men to boast ? On the contrary, what strong motives for the most profound humility ? I will allow, nevertheless, that there are some men so good and upright, as to act always from the noblest principles of virtue ; for by a special providence, Almighty God has so ordered things, that good men of this description have existed, do, and will exist in all ages, in all nations, and will continue to exist to the end of the world. But I would ask whence are derived those rare and happy qualifications ? From dust and ashes ? No : from thy hand, O my God, from thy fostering grace, “from whom all excellent gifts descend.” If they proceed then from the hand of God, why boast ? Why not rather feel your misery and wants, and humble yourselves under them ?

Besides, my brethren, be pleased to consider that this degree of excellence is confined to very few. The great bulk of mankind can boast of nothing but imperfection and weakness ; and if in their progress through life some good qualities occasionally appear, they are generally blended with such vices or imperfections as eclipse or obscure their lustre. Their lives may be justly compared to those gloomy days which are seldom brightened, and that but for a moment, with the cheerful rays of the sun. For one instant of sunshine you have whole hours of obscurity—for one good quality, many considerable imperfections. Seeing, therefore, that man possesses nothing of himself but sin and error, how is it possible for him to glory in his own thoughts ? Should he not rather, from a just contemplation of his nature, sink as it were into the most profound humility, into a kind of self-annihilation ? Notwithstanding, we often meet persons so thoughtless, so inconsiderate, so full of folly, as to raise themselves, in their own aspiring thoughts, above the rest of mankind.

One should really imagine, from the behaviour of these persons, that they were not formed of the same clay with their fellow-creatures. Their vanity is so intolerably great, they cannot bear to hear one good word of their neighbour ; but on the contrary, seek every opportunity of lessening him in the eyes of the public. Should others, by successful industry or casual incidents, step into a genteel light in the world ; should

their personal merits create, and their virtues win the regard and the esteem of the public, their proud hearts are immediately alarmed and shocked; nor do they think it the least shame to employ every mean and little art, even to become the foul organ, the vile echo, of every calumny and slander, to cast a shade over the merit of those who prove so offensive to their malignant eyes. "Earth and dirt that thou art, what reason hast thou to pride?" This instruction the Spirit of God addresses to all in general; but still, I maintain, it is particularly applicable to the vain and the proud. Why so? Because they are, in reality, the most contemptible part of mankind—strip them of the ornaments of riches, divest them of the outward show of fortune, and you discover the basest, vilest heart; a most contemptible compound of ignorance and stupidity, envy and malice, selfishness and pride.

"Let them therefore humble themselves," as St. Paul directs, "under the powerful hand of God;" because all mankind in general have nothing to boast of, and they in particular have less reason than all the rest to glory in themselves, destitute as they are of all sorts of merit; for if rank and distinction were always the reward of merit and virtue, those I am speaking of would certainly be placed among the lowest of mankind. Such are the just and humble sentiments of humility which a perfect knowledge of ourselves should inspire us with. But what should contribute more effectually to that purpose is the command which Jesus Christ has left us upon this head.

Were man left to himself he would hardly think of fixing his attention upon, and taking a near view of his own littleness and misery; because a contemplation of this kind must necessarily be disagreeable to that self-love which is born with us and seems to be interwoven with our nature. But when Almighty God commands us to study and to know ourselves, in order, by consequence, to entertain a correct and humble opinion of ourselves, it follows that neither self-love or in-born pride can set up either excuse or evasion to this solemn command. Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, who had the salvation of mankind in view in every word and action of his upon earth, addressing his disciples, that is, you and me, and the Christians of all nations and of all times who look up to the rewards of heaven, says unto them: "Learn of me," not to create the heavens or the earth, nor to remove mountains and cast them into the sea—not to perform any other prodigy of nature, but (observe the command you are bound to learn) "for I am meek and humble of heart."

Humility, therefore, will always be the distinguishing

character of the true disciples of Christ. Without humility you do not learn of Christ; you copy not his footsteps, and unless you copy his footsteps, you can have no claim to life everlasting. The importance of this virtue, my brethren, may be seen, from its constant exemplification in the sacred person of our Redeemer, as well as the various occasions wherein he instructs his followers on this head: "Amen I say unto you, unless you become as little children," how so?—meek and humble like little children—"you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." At another time: "When thou shalt be called to a wedding, take thy seat in the last place." Again: "He that wishes to be greatest amongst you, let him become a servant to the rest." Finally, Jesus Christ, your Lord, your God and your model, of whom St. Paul says: "He humbled himself as it were to nothing, by taking upon him the figure of a slave;" this God I say, closes his last intercourse with his disciples, before his death, with a most pressing exhortation to humility; and he grounds it on a most singular example: "If I, who am your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash the feet of each other: for I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you also may do the like."

The obligation and the practice of humility being made clear from the authority of holy writ, and enforced by the example of Jesus Christ, we are naturally led to the consideration of what humility consists in—a question of no small nicety. The doctors of the Church and writers upon a spiritual life, have almost all varied in opinion upon the question, what humility consisted in. Some will have it, that humility consists in a thorough knowledge of ourselves and our natural insignificance; others in shunning and despising all honour and distinction before men; whilst others suppose it to consist in seeking for humiliation and abjection. But in the views of men of the nicest conceptions and most correct way of thinking, those different opinions appear no more than the marks or external effects of humility. Humility, therefore, in their judgment, consist in a habitual disposition of the mind, of paying the Almighty God the honour due to his supreme greatness, so as never to transgress or omit any part of our duty from a regard to the vain glory of this world: for he that knows the supreme greatness of God, must certainly see how little there is in the whole creation besides; and he that sees this and is governed by this inward principle, so far as to pay the just regard to the greatness of God upon every occasion, is truly and sincerely humble.

From this exposition follow three degrees of humility : the first—to know and acknowledge inwardly, in the sight of God, that of ourselves we are nothing ; the second—never to violate any essential part of our duty, either through the fear of contempt or desire of distinction ; the third—to despise ourselves and wish to be despised by others—not only to bear with, but even seek and rejoice in the occasions of being contemned and despised by others. The first and second degrees are absolutely necessary for salvation ; the last concerns those alone who aspire to a higher degree of perfection. You all perceive, my brethren, from what I have said, the necessity of fulfilling the essential and necessary parts of humility ; that is, to think little of yourselves, in the sight of God and the sight of man ; and if any perfections you may have (for perfections there are, and distinguished perfections both of body and mind) to acknowledge them as the gifts of heaven ; and that the more we receive the more accountable we shall be unto Almighty God.

Did we act universally in this manner, we should be strangers to that vanity and arrogance which seem to overrule every condition of life. Then, we should never see those blessed with excellent and shining parts, running down those that have scarcely any, because they would, as they should, consider, that no man is truly great but in the eyes of God ; and that talents misapplied are much inferior to that simplicity which sanctifies the heart without swelling or puffing up the mind. Then, we should never see the superior ranks in life looking down with disdain on the inferior ; because they would, as they should, consider that no one is truly rich or elevated but in grace or virtue ; and that gold which now creates the distinction, is no more than painted dirt, which were it to pass into hands they now look down on, would perhaps create more honour and applause than they ever were, or ever will be held in. Then, in a word, every man would know himself—the ignorant his ignorance, the proud his folly, the weak and imperfect his weakness and imperfection. Mankind would know that all excellency is derived from above, and should always be referred unto God ; so as never “to seek their own glory to the prejudice of the glory of Christ.” Then likewise should we all reap the precious advantages which flow from the practice of humility. What those advantages are, shall be the subject of the second part of this discourse.

Second—The spirit of God directs : “The greater thou art, humble thyself the more ;” whereby you shall obtain two

great advantages—honour before man, and grace before God. When I speak of honour as a sure and constant attendant upon humility, I don't mean that vain and false honour which consists in the esteem and applause of sinners, and is generally bestowed upon the most undeserving men. No; this is rather a humiliation than a real honour, because no wise or virtuous man thinks it the least credit to be high in the esteem of those who are not only vicious and profligate in themselves, but also the zealous patrons and abettors of the vices and profligacy of others. True honour consists in the esteem, good opinion, and applause of all wise, honest and righteous men. It consists in the approbation of Almighty God: for St. Paul says, "It is not he that commends himself, that is to be approved or applauded, but he whom God commends." The rest is no more than a vain and empty show of distinction—"All flesh being as grass, and its glory as the flowers of the field." True honour, therefore, that honour which ranks us, first, high before man—and, secondly, supremely high before God, must proceed from humility: for the Spirit of God says: "Honour and glory shall march before the humble man;" and our Lord Jesus Christ declares, that "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Who are they that acquire honour, and meet with regard and distinction from all knowing and upright men? Are they not persons of a modest and humble deportment? What veneration is paid the man of wealth, who, overlooking the distance that fortune or custom has placed between him and the rest of mankind, shows, upon every occasion, that he knows how to distinguish and revere the Christian, even in the most lowly conditions of life! A man of this character—does he not acquire high honour before men? for even in this life "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." A man of distinguished parts, who, at the same time that he is conscious of his merit, "glories in no other knowledge than the knowledge of Christ," who constantly devotes to the public good those talents which a vain and interested heart generally directs to private interest or empty applause: is he not, I say, revered, commended, and highly honoured by mankind? for even in this life "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

How venerable is that young person, who, unmindful of the graces that adorn her, never sees or notices any imperfections in others: on the contrary, takes every opportunity of setting forth their good qualities in the fairest view, and glossing over the imperfections of the body by the perfections of the mind. Is not one of this character extolled high before mankind? for

even in this life "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." On the contrary, in what light are those considered who are eternally raising themselves above their fellow creatures? Are they not the scorn, the contempt of mankind? The higher they rise in their own towering imaginations, the lower they are depressed by all those that know their haughtiness and pride.

Even Divine Providence interferes to pull down the gigantic pride and arrogance of those vain and ambitious minds, who are continually raising in their own thoughts a structure capable of reaching the highest heavens. Our Saviour says, in the Gospel: "He that exalteth himself shall be humbled." And "honour and glory," says St. Paul, "belong to God alone:" he cannot bear to see a vile, despicable insect encroaching on his rights and usurping his prerogatives; like Lucifer, that head of the reprov'd angels, who would fain soar to the throne of God, and make himself like the Most High. But as God cannot bear such usurpation, he never fails to bring about such changes and revolutions, as must level the proud heart in humiliation, and cover it with confusion.

Does not daily experience furnish you all with proofs of the justice of this remark? Have you ever known any of those who are constantly undervaluing or ridiculing their neighbours, but met with some disgrace, some misfortune, that touched them in the most delicate spot—their honour? Disgrace here, or misfortune, is always conducted by the unerring hand of God, who will always and on all occasions make good his word—"He that exalteth himself shall be humbled." If therefore you wish to avoid the dreadful humiliations of the heavy hand of God, be humble yourselves in your thoughts, in your expressions and deportment; whereby you will not only obtain honour before man, but grace before God.

"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble," says St. James: graces of forgiveness, and graces of improvement in sanctity and merit. I say graces of forgiveness, which you all know to be verified by the whole history of the Jewish people, who always removed the anger and scourges of heaven by their humiliations alone. There never was, nor never will be, so effectual a method of removing the anger of God, as, humility; because "a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise," which you shall see exemplified in a few instances.

King David, who sinned and transgressed the law, was confident of mercy, so soon as he humbled and reduced himself to

that state which gives all glory unto God, and prepares the way for the execution of his mercies. He therefore beseeches the Lord "to look down upon his humility." He calls not in vain; the Lord beheld and forgave him.

Achab, one of the most unjust and unrighteous princes that ever sat upon the throne of Israel, after his injustices and violence were carried to the highest, the Lord sent his prophet to tell him he took notice of his iniquities, and resolved to punish him. Achab, terrified at this notice, covered himself with sackcloth, and humbled himself exceedingly. Behold, the Almighty speaks to his prophet a second time: "Hast thou not seen Achab humbled in my sight?"—Observe: "Because Achab hath humbled himself before me, I will not pour down upon him the evils I mentioned." Here humility stops the uplifted hand of God, at least for a time.

Manasses, one of the most wicked princes that ever disgraced the throne of Juda, whose iniquities forced the Almighty to punish and chastise him severely, in allowing the Assyrian to drag him to Babylon, ignominiously bound in iron chains; yet, by humbling himself under the powerful hand of God, was afterwards restored to his kingdom and the splendour of his former reign. The impious and insolent Nabuchodonoser, after being reduced by Almighty God to the level of a beast, and living and sleeping on the grass of the forest for seven years, in common with the cattle: yet upon acknowledging, in the midst of his humiliations, the powerful and supreme justice of the omnipotent God, was thereupon raised again to the glory and elevation of the most powerful monarch of the east.

If from the Old, we pass to the New Law, we shall find, in one place, Mary Magdalen, a woman notorious for her sins, receiving full forgiveness from the lips of Jesus Christ himself: but in what circumstances? After humbling herself to the lowest degree, casting herself down at the feet of our Saviour, in a public assemblage, bathing them with her tears, and wiping them with her hair. In another place, a publican, or tax gatherer—one by his profession liable to commit the greatest injustices—descends from the temple justified. Upon what occasion? After he had humbled himself to the ground in the lower part of the temple, thinking himself unworthy of advancing, or even of lifting up his eyes unto God. In a word, if we consult the whole system of religion, we shall find it filled with assurances and examples of the surprising effects of humility, not only in drawing down the grace of forgiveness, but likewise the grace of improvement in sanctity and merit.

This, my brethren, is a necessary consequence, from the nature and excellence of humility; as it is an undoubted principle of our religion, that the more excellent any act of virtue is, the more productive it is of grace. Now, that humility is a virtue of the most excellent kind, appears, not only from the illustrations I have given of it from the Old and the New Law, but also from the fathers. St. Cyprian, in his sermon upon the Nativity, calls it the root and foundation of all virtues. It is impossible to rise to the higher degrees, says St. Chrysostom, without passing first through the lower, which consist in humility. It is not only the foundation, but the perfection of virtue, according to St. Austin, who beautifully compares it to a grand and stately edifice, which rises high in proportion as the foundation is laid low—so that virtue always increases in proportion to our humility; whereas, if the foundation be deficient, the whole superstructure must necessarily fall to the ground. The same holy father and doctor of the Church goes further: in his fifty-sixth Epistle, he proposes and answers the following important questions: What is the first thing in all religion? humility—what is the second? humility—what is the third? humility. As if the greatest virtues religion prescribes were reducible to this one point—humility.

This will appear no way surprising, if we consider the great and extensive influence of humility. Other virtues are limited in their nature, and confined to certain particular effects—sobriety, for instance, regulates our actions only with regard to food; justice, with regard to property; liberality, with regard to riches; modesty, with regard to dress; but humility takes in everything; as it subjects the whole soul unto God. It makes us consider the Divinity as ALL IN ALL, and pay unto him the honour due to his supreme greatness, in every action and circumstance of life; whence it becomes a virtue of the first and most excellent class.

This being established and admitted, how much must the practice of it be profitable to the soul, and productive of divine grace! The holy fathers, to express their ideas of the benefits of humility, use a figure, and compare it to those fruitful valleys which are fertilized and enlivened by the refreshing dew, the vivifying rain, and all the kind influence of the skies, whilst the lofty hills are dried up by a burning sun and parching winds, and thereby reduced to a miserable state of sterility. Besides, humility has ever been the favourite virtue of the saints. I will go further, and say, that no one was ever remarkable for sanctity, that was not equally so for humility. The more the Almighty rewarded their merit with grace, the

more they sunk and depressed themselves in his sight ; not only avoiding every shadow of applause, by concealing all their good works, but wishing, if possible, to conceal them from themselves. Jesus Christ, who sees in private, will reward in public, and will manifest, by miracles, the concealed humiliations of his servants, as he did the hermit Paul in the desert, and Mary in Egypt.

Having thus shown you the necessity, the excellency, and the advantages of humility, it remains only that we draw a just consequence from the whole. We are all sinners. We all stand in need of the mercies of the Lord : without his mercies we shall be lost. Humility, as we have seen, is the most powerful means of drawing down those mercies. Let no day, therefore, pass, during your short pilgrimage here below, without practising one or more acts of humility. Humility is of two sorts—of the mind and body. That of the mind is more acceptable: silence when thwarted or contradicted, even though you should be right; meekness under sufferings, because sufferings are due to sin; but take care that every act of humility be conformable to, and grounded on, the spirit of religion. It is religion tells you that empire, and power, and glory, belong to God alone. Let us publicly confess before heaven and earth, that we are miserable, sinful creatures, incapable of all good, oppressed with sin and imperfection, unworthy all notice, and deserving the highest contempt and humiliation!

Such sentiments often felt, often repeated, will excite the notice and call forth the mercies of the Great Eternal God; and from being humble upon earth, he will raise you to greatness in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

SERMON VI.

ON FORGIVENESS.

“Whoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be guilty of hell-fire.”

MATT., c. v., v. 22.

THE relation that man stands in with regard to man, the ties that connect him with his brethren, as being the images of God, members of Christ, enlightened with the same faith, and called to the same hopes of eternal happiness, are such as not only to demand our best offices, but oblige us to treat our brother with a certain deference, were he the meanest of mankind: “to prevent each other with honour,” as St. Paul directs; and even to love him, according to the new and

favourite command of Jesus Christ, our Lord : for without the love of our brethren we cannot love God, and unless we love God we can have no claim to life everlasting.

But that we should be excluded the kingdom of heaven, and condemned to hell-fire for using contemptuous language, may appear very surprising to many not well grounded in the principles of religion : that a wayward and angry expression—"whosoever shall say, Thou fool"—should be followed by such fatal consequences is infallibly true, because the Gospel assures us, "he shall be guilty of hell-fire." To be then so far forgetful of your duty, as to break out into expressions of real anger or contempt against your neighbour, is to dissolve the bonds of charity, to violate the first obligations of the law, and to become liable to all the wrath and vengeance of God.

This principle is not only true with regard to our brethren, in general, it extends likewise to our most bitter and implacable enemies, as appears from the Gospel whence I have selected the foregoing text as the subject of your instruction this evening, where our Saviour orders us, "to leave our gift at the altar, and go and be reconciled to our brother." Without this reconciliation or forgiveness, all your prayers, all your alms, all your good works, will avail you nought before God : for "he that loveth not his brother," says St. Paul, "remaineth in death ;" that is, is cut off from the joys of life everlasting. This weighty material point, how few are there who seriously take it into consideration ! Most people conceive themselves warranted in returning hatred for hatred, blow for blow ; hence those feuds, animosities, and dissensions, which tear up the mystical robe of Christ—I mean the society of the faithful all over the Christian world. If we consult the Gospel, we shall there find the obligation we lie under of loving our very enemies, as well as forgiving them ; but lest the subject become too copious, we shall for the present separate them, and examine,

First—The strictness of the law which enjoins forgiveness ; and,

Secondly—The duties it prescribes.

Eternal wisdom of my God ! whose forgiveness and mercies are thy brightest attributes, enable thy servant to teach those present the ways of forgiveness : and whilst I teach, do thou touch their hearts with that brilliant example of forgiveness which thou didst hold forth from the cross.

First—What can be more binding, my brethren, than an obligation enforced by divine authority, which extends to every rank and station of life, and is not to be dispensed with

in any circumstance or for any consideration whatsoever? Now this is precisely the nature of the obligation of forgiveness. The Almighty God orders us to forgive: he orders it without exception of persons, and in such a manner as to admit neither of alleviation or excuse. If you only love those that love you, and do good only to repay acts of benevolence, what more do you do than the Pagans, who, from a principle of gratitude engrafted in our nature, are never wanting in expressions of kindness towards those who have conferred any obligations upon them? "I say unto you, Love your enemies"—they are the words of a God; "do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and despise you."—Matt., vi.

This is not one of those counsels which our Saviour recommended to his disciples for their greater perfection, and which may be neglected without a breach of the law, or incurring his displeasure—as when he recommends letting our cloak go, when a man attempts taking it by force; or to turn the left cheek, when we are struck upon the right; although one may very lawfully sue in justice for his property, and forcibly repel any violence, provided it be done with due moderation. No: the obligation of loving our enemies is not one of these counsels, but a most formal and rigorous precept, the violation of which is necessarily attended with a grievous offence against the Divinity; and behold the consequence—"If ye do not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your sins." As we can never aspire to eternal happiness without the forgiveness of our sins, and that the Word of God here assures us we never will be forgiven unless we forgive, it follows, that to refuse complying with this precept, is a capital transgression of the law, since that alone is sufficient to exclude us from the kingdom of heaven. How deplorable, then, is the condition of those who obstinately refuse to be reconciled to their enemies, and sincerely forgive the injuries they had received! Whilst they remain in this disposition, nothing can be more true, than that they can have no part with Christ, no share in his kingdom; for he says: "There is no mercy for those who show no mercy to others."

It is related in the Gospel, that a certain servant owed a considerable debt to his master, and upon application for indulgence, the master most generously and tenderly forgave the whole debt. Some small debts had been owing to this servant—these he shortly afterwards applied for; but he applies with urgency, with sternness and cruelty, unmindful of the indigence and misery of his debtors. This barbarous oppres-

sion could not remain concealed : it spread about, and reached the master's ears. Justly astonished at such unheard of oppression, he sends for this cruel servant, reproaches him with his inhumanity, which received a new aggravation from the indulgence he had met with himself, and orders him instantly to be cast into prison, until he pays the entire debt.

The application of this parable is obvious. We all stand deep debtors unto Almighty God, on the score of our manifold sins and daily transgressions; these his infinite mercy is pleased to forgive—at least is ready to forgive, provided we call on him with humility and compunction; and yet, to the disgrace of Christianity and of human nature, there shall be found a man, I mean a vile insect, a contemptible worm, who refuses to forgive his brother a trifling debt, a feather, if rightly weighed, in comparison of the heavy debts that have been remitted him. Strange infatuation ! Blind corruption of the human heart ! But observe the consequence—learn it from the words of your Redeemer, and tremble at the instruction :—this unrelenting man will be cast into the dark prison of hell, until he pays the last farthing; that is, until the inflexible wrath of heaven is satisfied, by his endless and interminable sufferings.

Say, thou man of nice honour, of tender feelings ; say, thou compound of pride and passion, hast thou ever seriously reflected on this subject ? To remove the weighty considerations that arise from religion, say, hast thou weighed in the balance of reason and self-interest, what it is, by unforgiveness, to provoke, to dare, to defy the avenging justice of God, rather than suppress thy resentments ? Dost thou prefer descending into the black and burning lake of hell, drawn down by thy desires of revenge, rather than occupy a place among the saints, raised up by the god-like virtue of forgiveness ? Such considerations, my brethren, fill you, I hope, with a holy horror—let them serve to suppress, at least to cool, your resentments, prepare your souls for the mild and peaceable dispositions that religion inspires : otherwise you transgress an obligation enforced by divine authority, and in such a manner as not to admit of exception or excuse.

A man bent upon revenge is always ready, with a number of plausible reasons, to justify his conduct. Listen, and observe the imposing air of sincerity with which he speaks—“I am not one of those touchy, over-nice persons, who are piqued at every trifle, and make a mountain of a pebble ; but the injury I received is too serious to be overlooked. I was injured, in the broad light of day, in the face of the public, by an

inferior : every man of either rank or distinction, must support a character, otherwise he sinks into disrepute, if not contempt—I owe a debt of justice to myself, which compels me to retaliate this injury !” Fine words, my brethren : let us examine and weigh them in the scales of the sanctuary. The injury was too serious to be overlooked—what was the injury ? An unguarded expression, a disrespectful look, perhaps. And is this sufficient cause for you, O revengeful man ! to vomit out invectives against your neighbour ? to vilify and asperse him ? to injure and insult him ? to attempt and bring about his ruin ? When the principles of reason and of religion become shipwrecked by such conduct as this, in vain do I ask where your faith is, your hopes of future mercy, or your charity. Had you even the power (I mean not the ability, but the right) of punishing, which you really have not, surely punishment should be proportioned to the fault ; and what proportion, what justice is maintained between the injury you pretend to have received, and the animosity you express ? But admitting the injury to be great as you conceive it, and levelled with the blackest designs, does it follow from thence that you have a right to let loose your resentments, and pursue them at full liberty ?

No, my brethren : Almighty God has reserved that right to himself alone : “ Revenge unto me,” says the Lord, by the pen of King David, “ I shall return it :” so that whatever undertakes to redress his own private wrongs, usurps a divine right, which must necessarily draw down the heavy judgments and provoke the anger of an offended God. Every man having an undoubted right to his property, his character and fame, I confess without any difficulty, that every man who is injured may lawfully sue for an adequate reparation in justice ; but I say, it must be without rancour or spleen, leaving the determination to those whom God has appointed and entrusted with his power to govern and protect us ; and in cases where justice cannot be obtained, you are bound to commit the decision to God alone, at whose tribunal all injustice must necessarily be tried and condemned.

But can a man of rank, distinction, and character bear a public insult ? Jesus Christ will answer that question—Supreme in rank and distinction, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God—before whom, and in whose hands, the whole world, and all the worlds that swim in the vast and immeasurable regions of space, are only as one drop of water—behold him in Jerusalem, buffeted, spit upon, insulted, and

abused, by all the ruffians of the Jewish rabble ; silent under their calumnies, patient under their blows, and their advocate for forgiveness with his Father on the cross. He was a God, you will say ; he was, I answer, and by that title possessed the power, as well as the right, to inflict on his enemies the most exemplary punishments—and yet how great was his charity, his forgiveness, to his most bitter enemies ! Who can pretend to greater distinction than David ? He was most injuriously treated by Saul, after delivering his country from the invading foe, and fixing the crown, that was tottering, upon his head ; and yet he never attempted to be revenged for all the injuries he underwent.

But a man of character to be insulted ?—What character ? Is not a disciple of Christ your first character ? As such, you are bound to practise his law and copy his example ? What law ; what example ?—Forgiveness. But a man forfeits his honour who pockets an affront ? Among the ignorant, the foolish, the unthinking part of mankind, he may ; among those have no proper notion of equity or justice, clemency or goodness. And who should be ambitious of their esteem ? But the good, the wise, and the virtuous will highly honour and applaud him who overlooks and passes by an injury. The most pusillanimous, when worked upon by rage or fear of infamy, will attempt any danger ; but a heroic spirit alone can forgive. True courage consists not in opposing all laws, divine and human : but in despising danger in a rational cause, where our religion or our country demands our services ; in faithfully adhering to our duty, notwithstanding the censure or the contempt of mankind.

But a man's honour ?—What plea will honour make for you at the bar of God's justice ? It is much better, in an affair of this nature, to incur dishonour before man than reproof and condemnation before God. "If God be for us," says St. Paul, "who is against us ?" And I say, if God be against you, who is for you ? What protection or shelter can you find in the vain applause of man, against the flaming effusions of an angry God ? How shall it protect you in that dreadful future day, when in vain the hills and mountains shall be invoked to cover the sinner ; when, as he declares himself, he will deal out "judgment without mercy" against "all those who show no mercy" to others. These are the words of an omnipotent God, who, from an essential regard to his excellence and greatness, cannot overlook the violation of his law ; and from his innate justice cannot but punish it in the most dreadful manner. To whom does God speak thus ?—To

you and to me ; to all who profess themselves his disciples : and this denunciation extends to every situation and circumstance in life. The obligation of forgiveness cannot be dispensed with, in any rank or condition, under pain of forfeiting all claim to life everlasting. The duties it prescribes come next under consideration in the sequel of this discourse.

Second—Notwithstanding the great depravity of morals among the Christians of our days, few there are who publicly refuse complying with the law of forgiveness. Men of bitter dispositions do not hesitate to acknowledge the force of the obligation, and assert that they really and sincerely do forgive their enemies. But a fatal error lies under this exterior cloak, this shadow of forgiveness. From the obligation of forgiveness, two branches arise, one relating to the interior, the other the exterior ; one touching the mind, the other the body : by the one, we are obliged to wish our enemies well, *diligite inimicos* ; by the other, to do them positive good, when occasion requires ; two important considerations, which call for your most serious attention.

I say, in the first place, and it is plain from the nature of things, that in consequence of the love we owe our enemies, we are bound not to wish them harm ; because, according to the received opinion of mankind, love and hatred, respecting the same object, cannot dwell together in the same breast. Whoever, therefore, pretends to forgive as Christ commands, must not only discharge from the heart hatred, but furnish it with a Christian love ; a love that not only prompts to action, but removes and banishes every sentiment that has the least tendency to the prejudice of his neighbour. Now let me ask you, who is it forgives in this manner ? Consult your own experience, and you observe this and that person, whom you know to be greatly wronged or oppressed ; and you admire their magnanimous virtue in forgiving this enemy—that oppressor. But follow them into private life, and observe them in every company, by bitter invectives and keen reproaches ; by lively representations, perhaps false colourings, of the injuries they sustained themselves, as well as others, contradict by their actions, the false appearance of forgiveness they held forth. Observe their secret triumphs, their cruel joys, upon occasion of this calamity, that ruin ; and tell me, is this forgiveness ? No, my brethren ; they never forgave. They only disguised their resentments ; not removing them as they should ; otherwise they would be very far from showing any animosity in their words or countenance, whenever any enemy of theirs is made the subject of discourse.

“True charity is bountiful,” says St. Paul ; “it knows not how to act amiss.” Forgiveness is the daughter of charity. Whoever forgives not, transgresses the law of charity. because charity is merciful, and mercy is forgiving. Let us look a little farther, and behold others on their knees, after receiving the slightest injury, loading their enemies with imprecations and curses, and calling aloud with extended arms, not for mercy, but that the curses and vengeance of God may light upon their enemies ! Almighty God ! before whom the pillars of heaven tremble with awe, stop thine ear and shut thy hand, when unhappy mortals thus presume to speak ! Such unhappy wretches should know that their curses will only fall on themselves, for their impiety ; for what greater affront could be offered unto God, than that his thunderbolts should await their commands ? and that his power and justice should be employed in seconding the malice of their hearts ? It is upon those occasions we may safely say, Almighty God never hears the petitions of sinners ; or if he should, it is only to pour down on their guilty heads the vengeance they require for others.

Almighty God may and will punish, it is true ; but it is when and in what manner he chooses, not conformable to your wicked or malicious desires. You have been wronged, you say, and destroyed—could your curses remove those wrongs, or recall destruction ? I will admit he wronged you—are you therefore to wrong, to destroy your own soul, by a most grievous iniquity ? Had you sacrificed your wrongs and your resentment, and a sacrifice of sweet savour they would be unto the Lord, he, in his own time. would certainly have done you justice ; but by your unchristian manner of abominable imprecation, you have forfeited the merit of forbearance in this life, and its reward in the next. But you forgave when your passion cooled. This will not wipe away, or extenuate the crime you committed in your passion. My dear brethren, you should never allow your passion to inflame you with such rage as to break out into any scandalous expressions of revenge. It has come to the lot of every few, I know, to be such masters of their hearts, as to suppress the first emotions of anger, upon receiving any considerable injury ; but I equally know, it is still in our power, with the assistance of heaven, so to check these emotions, as by degrees to suppress them entirely. Upon those occasions, it is in our power to beg of the great God the grace to master our passions, which he will not refuse to such as call for it with humility and fervour. The fatal error lies in neglecting, in such cases, to bridle our

unruly passions, and to apply above for aid, where aid would certainly be found. Upon the whole it follows, that if any one wishes another deliberately any considerable harm, either in or out of passion, such person dissolves the great law of charity, the favourite law of Christ, for which at his awful tribunal he shall certainly undergo a severe judgment. To discharge, therefore, your duty, either with regard to those who have been your enemies heretofore, or who may be so hereafter, you must take special care so to watch over the sentiments of your mind, as never to intend or wish them any harm or prejudice. Even here you must not stop—you are obliged to do them positive good when occasion requires.

This obligation arises clearly from the sermon preached by our Lord Jesus Christ on the mountain, "Do good to them that offend you, pray for them that persecute you." To forgive, therefore, is not enough—to wish your enemies well is not even sufficient. You must do your enemy positive good, when occasion requires ; otherwise you make sterile the new and favourite precept of our Lord, "Love your enemies ;" a precept he honoured with the special dignity of calling it his own ; and a precept whereby Christians were to be distinguished from all other inhabitants of the earth. This great and important precept is not to be confined to the cold and languid operations of the mind. No ; it must arise into action. You must love your enemies as Christ loved you. Consider the love he was graciously pleased to show us. It consisted not merely in declining to punish us as we deserved, but it was productive of the greatest blessings ; since it was his love that made him offer himself up a victim to his Father, and become a ransom for our sins upon the cross. If then you forgive your enemies as you ought, you will forgive them as Christ forgave us ; not in words, but in effect, by doing them positive good.

To illustrate this point, divines distinguish two sorts of offices ; the common civilities in society, which every citizen has a right to expect from his fellow-citizen, every friend from a friend, every relation from a relation, every Christian from a Christian ; and they add, that every one is obliged in conscience, not only to show those usual civilities even to an enemy, but to use the particular expressions of friendship ; so that any one who refuses to speak to his enemy when spoken to, to return his salute when saluted, or who excludes him from any share in his prayers or alms, must be guilty of a heinous violation of the Divine Law, which obliges us to love our enemies as Jesus Christ loved us. Further, they say, there are many occasions, wherein we are obliged to go beyond these outward expres-

sions ; to treat our enemies with the most sincere and effectual benevolence, so as to assist them either with our counsel or fortune, and as often as they stand in need of it ; because it would be the greatest enormity for a man, who professes himself a disciple of Christ, to see his fellow-creature perish for want either of his advice or assistance, merely because he had offended him.

Finally, they assure us that in many cases we are bound to prevent our enemies with friendship ; and this is always the case—the bounden duty of the aggressor ; which, though a point of the utmost importance, is very little attended to in several circumstances of life. Often do we behold severe indignities offered both in public and in private ; yet the aggressors rest contented without feeling the force of the obligation they lie under. Their pride, or a certain distinction, which they occupy no where but in their own ideas, will not allow them to step forward and make advances towards a reconciliation ; but be it known, that without this, Almighty God will never be reconciled unto them. The injured persons, my brethren, do not precisely lie under the same obligations as the injurers. Those have a right to receive—these to make the reparation.

Charity is not inconsistent with justice ; it heightens, not destroys it ; so that whoever injures first, should be first to repair the injury. This obligation is so strict, in the opinion of the divines, that none can be admitted to the holy sacrament who refuses to comply therewith.

There are occasions, I know, wherein the person injured is obliged to forego his rights ; but that is when it becomes necessary to prevent the great scandal that must ensue from insisting upon a reparation, or where a prospect arises of gaining over to Jesus Christ a brother, who must otherwish perish through a rash, headstrong, and ungovernable temper. Here is the law, and the distinctions of the law for you, in their full extent. It remains only to be considered, how the law has been fulfilled hitherto. Examine, and let me ask, in what manner has each of you been disposed towards his enemies heretofore ? Have you sincerely forgiven—have you loved them as Jesus Christ commands ; so as neither to wish, nor to do them any harm ; to pay them the common duties of social and Christian life, and even to serve them upon necessary occasions ? How are you now disposed with regard to them ? Do you sincerely forgive them from your hearts ?

Go, then, at the end of this sermon, go and be reconciled to your enemies, if any you have. Blind and corrupt nature may

feel the humiliation ; the recollection of past grievances may revive, and resentments become inflamed at the thought ; but consider it as a God that commands it, and that your salvation or eternal perdition depends on your obedience or resistance ! Once more I say, go and salute your enemy. He is your brother in Christ. Frail clay, once has he offended—often have you offended the great Being of Heaven ; unless you forgive, how can you say, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us ?” because by those words you defy the anger of God and invoke his thunderbolts on your guilty heads. The words are, “Forgive us,” only “as we forgive ;” as we forgive not, do not thou forgive ; but if we forgive others, do thou forgive us. “I will,” says the Lord.

No longer, then, shall injuries or the recollection of them dwell with us. Let the ignorance of our duties, O Lord, plead some excuse for the past,” “for they knew not what they did.” Fully sensible now of thy law, we sincerely forgive all the injuries we ever received, and aided by thy grace, we purpose to bear up with meekness, as thou didst on the cross, with whatever injuries may be offered to us here below—to receive them as chastisements from thy fatherly hands, to the end, that loving here in the bonds of charity with mankind, we may all one day for ever praise thee, in the enjoyment of their “great rewards” in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

SERMON VII.

ON GRACE.

“I give thanks to my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you through Jesus Christ.”—1 Cor., c. i., v. 4.

IF the apostle was so mindful of returning the Almighty continual thanks for the favours he was pleased to bestow on those that had been converted to the faith of Christ, it is not to be supposed he could have been any way unmindful of the blessings he had himself received. The various graces he had been favoured and adorned with, must undoubtedly have been always present to his thoughts, especially as many of them were of the most high and distinguished nature that could possibly be thought of. Favours of such high and distinguished excellence are not indifferently granted to all men. “The grace of God is manifold,” says St. Peter, nor is it distributed alike to all persons ; and according to St. Paul, “Grace is given to every one of us according to the measure

of the gift of Christ." Grace, therefore, being various—to some more, to others less—it is a certain principle, that he who has received even the least lies under the greatest obligations : for what obligations are not due for the immense and incomprehensible riches contained in our redemption, in our sanctification, in the remission of sin, and our frequent returns unto Almighty God? Is there any one moment of our lives not in some measure marked by the grace of God? Yet how few who ever make these manifold blessings the subject of gratitude, or even of serious reflection! Many there are unacquainted even with the nature of divine grace; others continually abuse it. I conceive it, therefore, a subject of vast importance to your instruction, to your improvement and edification, to consider divine grace in its nature and effect; because the contemplation of grace as a divine virtue coming from the hand of God, the fountain of all virtue, will become instructive on the one hand, whilst its effects may animate you to the practice of virtue on the other.

In the first part, you shall behold the nature and excellence of divine grace; in the second, the obligations it lays us under. In both, whilst I strive to inform the mind, I wish to touch the heart. But what can I do, O God! without the powerful influence of thy holy grace? O let it dwell and enlighten our conduct during our pilgrimage here below; let it point the way out to thy servants here assembled, that knowing thee, they may increase in thy love; and loving thee, they may merit a daily increase of thy holy grace!

First—Grace, in general, may be considered as a supernatural assistance which Almighty God grants us through the merits of Jesus Christ, to strengthen our natural weakness, and enable us to work out our salvation. Divine grace is of two sorts, habitual and actual. Habitual grace, is that which resides in the soul of every just man, whilst he continues faithful unto God; and actual grace, that which does not reside in the soul for any continuance, but only during the time of its operation. The excellence of divine grace is indeed so very great, that it can hardly be conceived by man, being of a supernatural order; whence it follows, that the most valuable things we can discover here below, such as riches, honours, knowledge, or pleasure, are all, as being in the order of nature, of an inferior rank, and, of course, not to be compared to grace, which is of the supernatural kind. As much, then, as the order of grace is above the order of nature, so much is divine grace, or the very least portion thereof, as divines say, beyond all the wealth or imaginary greatness of this world.

Nor can it be otherwise, my brethren, from the very nature of things—divine grace being the fruits of the death and passion of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, according to St. John : “The law was given by Moses ; but grace and truth were brought by Jesus Christ.” Should I ask to whom this divine grace is imparted, the answer is clear :—to the friends of God ; to those who, by co-operating with its influence, render themselves favourites of God ; “to those,” as St. John says, “who love him, and are equally loved by him and his Heavenly Father.” The gifts of nature he bestows upon all indifferently, “making the sun to shine, and the rain to pour down, at stated times, upon the just and the unjust,” as Christ himself says in the Gospel ; but his sanctifying grace is given to the just and good alone ; so that it becomes, in reality, the stamp of the Divinity, the divine pledge of the friendship of God, and the spiritual tie which binds and unites us to Christ ; or, as St. Paul has it, “The Almighty hath anointed us in Christ ; he hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

How valuable and excellent, then, must that be, which the Almighty grants unto his friends, as the pledge of his love and friendship ! Observe how fond people are of every mark of distinction which sets them above the crowd : the man of honour would sooner die than be deprived of the prerogatives which raise him to dignity among mankind. Observe now the distinction between us and those who have not been drawn out of the corrupted mass of mankind ; and whilst you observe, adore with reverence and fear the mysterious judgments of the Lord. What has raised you to the glorious condition of the adoptive children of God ? and before this title how vain and empty are all human titles and pre-eminences ! What has made you favourites of God, members of Christ, and co-heirs with him to the kingdom of heaven ?—The precious gift of sanctifying grace. Before we received this sanctifying grace we were enemies of God, “being all born children of wrath,” according to St. Paul : and not only enemies of God, but disqualified for his heavenly kingdom. This was the sad and deplorable condition we were in before we received the sanctifying grace of God in baptism. But as soon as this divine grace was infused into our souls, the Almighty took us into his love and friendship, and ranked us among those who were entitled to all the joys and glory of heaven. The reason why it is called justifying grace is, because it is the inward principle of justice, and makes us both just and righteous before God. So long, therefore, as this inward principle of

righteousness remains in our souls, so long are we the true children of God, and the objects of divine love : for the Almighty cannot behold this stamp or seal of Christ impressed upon our souls, without feeling for us the tender emotions of that love he always bore and showed his only begotten Son.

Divine grace is not only the inward principle of justice and righteousness, but likewise the spiritual tie which unites us to the Divinity ; so as to make us, as St. Peter says, "in some measure partakers of the divine nature !" For it is not to be questioned but the Divinity dwells in, and is a most intimately united to, the soul of every righteous man : "He that adheres to God," says St. Paul, "is one and the same spirit with him : " again, "Do not you know you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God resides in you?" But in what consists, in the judgment of the apostle, this intimate union which subsists between the Divinity and every righteous man ? Some divines remarkable for piety and learning, supported by the authority of many holy fathers, and especially those of the Greek Church, were of opinion, that by virtue of sanctifying grace the Holy Ghost is substantially, though not personally, united to the soul of a just man. St. Paul seems to hint at this : "The grace of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who has been given us ;" and further, "The Spirit giveth testimony unto our spirit," or soul, "that we are the children of God." This union, though substantial, is not personal or hypostatical, to distinguish it from that admirable union the second person of the Divinity contracted with the humanity of Christ, which communicated to him the divine nature, with all the attributes of the Divinity, and in virtue of which he became in reality the Son of God by nature ; whereas we are only the children of God by adoption, in consequence of the union the Holy Ghost contracts with our souls. Others, again, are of opinion that this union consists in the operation of the Spirit of God, which animates, protects, and cherishes the soul, so long as it is adorned with sanctifying grace, and by that means becomes the very life thereof ; all are, however, agreed, that nothing can be more intimate than that union which the Divinity contracts with the soul of every just man by means of divine grace ; so that if it were possible for the Almighty God not to be immediately present and intimately united to every part of the creation, from the immensity of his nature, he must take a most particular pleasure to dwell with, and remain united to the soul of a righteous man.

Divine grace, therefore, unites us unto God. By it we

truly possess the Almighty God, and are truly possessed by him. It is, as you have seen, the seal or stamp of Christ, and a sure pledge of life everlasting. But the moment we lose divine grace, and we lose it by the very first considerable sin we fall into after our conversion, we are separated from God, like a branch cut off from the stock whence it derived both life and nourishment. "He that abideth not in me," says our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in the Gospel, "shall be cast away like a withered branch." Whence it follows, that the Almighty withdraws his love and affection from us as soon as we forfeit his holy grace; and treats us thenceforward as persons unworthy his attention, his favours, or rewards. This consideration alone should animate you all, my brethren, with the greatest veneration and regard for the grace of God—a heavenly tie which alone is capable of preventing our separation from the divine source of happiness; but what should still increase its value in our opinion is, that it is likewise the principle which gives life to our actions, and makes them any way agreeable or meritorious in the eyes of God.

That there are actions truly meritorious, or certainly productive of a heavenly reward, appears from that passage in the Gospel, where Jesus Christ says, "Even a glass of water given in my name, shall not want its reward." But what is the principle that gives our actions such excellence, as to be worthy a divine reward?—Divine grace alone. "The stipend of sin is death," says St. Paul, "but the grace of God is everlasting life." It is the divine and sanctifying grace of God alone, that inspirits and dignifies them so far as to make them worthy the attention of a God, and his eternal rewards. So long then, as we are possessed of the heavenly treasure of sanctifying grace, every action we perform in view of Christ, and from the influence of an actual grace, is a meritorious action; that is to say, an action whereby we merit an increase of grace in this life, and an additional degree of glory in the next. In this situation, all the prayers we put up to heaven, all the alms we distribute among the poor, all the fasting or other acts of self-denial we perform, all the sufferings from pain or sickness we endure, all the contradictions or humiliations from rough or unreasonable tempers we sustain, are all so many additions to the glory and happiness that are reserved for us in the kingdom of heaven. What advantage so great as the possession of that grace which procures such blessings? Nothing should be so estimable in the eyes of a Christian, as a situation wherein he can daily, even hourly, add, by all

kinds of good works, to the treasures mentioned by Jesus Christ in the Gospel—the treasures promised to, and destined for, every true and faithful follower of Christ—those are the riches of heaven ; which are the more valuable, as they are not subject to violence from the midnight robber, or destruction from the worm, or decay from length of time.

Should we, on the other hand, be deprived, my brethren, of the sanctifying grace of God, all our actions are dead. St. Paul says so : “Though we should have faith enough to remove the mountains, and uplift them from their seats ; though we should distribute all our substance among the poor, and assign our bodies to flames, yet without charity,” or the love of God, which is always inseparable from sanctifying grace, “we are nothing ;” that is to say, no ways entitled to the friendship of God or his rewards. Again, St. John : “he that loveth not, abideth in death.” Now, whilst a man continues in a state of death, it is plain he cannot perform any action worthy of eternal life. You are not however, to imagine, that a Christian deprived of the sanctifying grace of God, cannot do good of any kind. No : this is an error justly condemned by the Church of God. For in this condition, one may pray, lament, and humbly implore the forgiveness of his sins, through the merits of Christ, by means of the actual graces which are given him, and which operate by pious thoughts in the mind, and good desires or emotions in the heart. Thus further graces may be, and generally are obtained, so as to bring about a perfect reconciliation with God. But be pleased to observe, that those actions do not entitle a person to any reward, because the sanctifying grace of God is not yet recovered, which is the principle that enlivens, and the source and root of all merit. Besides, although such actions do bring about a reconciliation with God, yet it is not from any merit they possess, but because it were in some measure unbecoming a God infinitely good and merciful not to forgive a sinner returning to him with sincerity, and earnestly soliciting pardon, in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, every good action we perform in the state of grace, and from a particular inspiration of the Holy Ghost, becomes necessarily meritorious of life everlasting ; according to what our Saviour says in the Gospel—“He that remaineth in me, is he that bringeth forth much fruit.” Seeing, therefore, that divine grace is the principle of justification, whereby we are delivered from the empire of Satan, the slavery of sin, and eternal misery, the just punishment of

sin; and likewise raised to the glorious condition of the adoptive children of God, from being children of wrath and the offspring of corruption—seeing, moreover, that it is the spiritual tie which unites us unto God, and the fruitful principle which enlivens and dignifies our actions, so far as to make them productive of the rewards and blessings of heaven; is it not with the strictest justice that St. Paul styles it, “a most inestimable treasure?” As an estimable treasure, is it now looked upon by the world? Do we manifest by our actions, by charity to the poor, meekness in our deportment, humility under suffering, charity among brethren, and love among all, that divine grace is the principle that animates our actions? Do we cherish it, I say, as St. Paul recommends by the parable of an “inestimable treasure?” If so, we should not, surely, be so ready to forfeit this holy grace upon every occasion, even for a momentary pleasure or a perishable interest. “Learn thy own dignity and greatness,” says the great St. Leo, “the dignity and greatness to which thou art raised by the grace of God, and disdain to fall back to thy native baseness and original obscurity.” Let us, then, be extremely thankful to the infinite goodness of God, who has imparted to us his holy grace, in preference to thousands of others, who are buried in the dark shades of error and sin; to thousands upon thousands, who, after losing it once, were deprived of it evermore. Let us be truly sorrowful for having abused it so often by the commission of sin. Let us be cautious, in the highest degree, to preserve it for the time to come: for although it be a treasure of the greatest value, yet it is a treasure we carry about us in a frail and brittle vessel, and necessarily draws along with it a certain train of obligations, which I shall now endeavour to lay before you.

Second—The first obligation we contract, with regard to divine grace, is gratitude. The common light of reason we all possess by nature points out the necessity of at least acknowledging the gifts we have received; and this acknowledgment should be proportioned to the magnitude or excellence of the gifts, and the dignity of the hand that bestows them. Divine grace is a gift of the greatest magnitude, the greatest excellence; because grace in this life is a sure pledge of glory hereafter, and the hand that bestows it is dignified beyond comprehension—the God of all glory. It follows then, from the light of reason, that grace imposes a debt of acknowledgment; and in this debt, all you, my brethren, and I too, will be found deeply involved. For this most excellent of God’s gifts, his holy grace, how often have we not all been

partakers of! First—his sanctifying grace in baptism, and afterwards as often as we have been reconciled to the Almighty after sin, in the tribunal of penance; secondly—his actual grace, or these inward touches of the Holy Ghost, which enlighten the mind, and excite the heart to the performance of good; thirdly—those graces which prevent and inspire, those desires which stir up and enable us to act, which begin, continue, and finish all the good we perform—in fine, not only those graces which are common to the generality of Christians, but likewise those strong, powerful, and victorious assistances which wean the heart from every unlawful affection, and disengage our souls from all inordinate attachment to the world, to unite them more intimately to God. Recollect, I beseech you, how often you have been favoured in so singular a manner from heaven; sum up in your minds all the pious thoughts you ever entertained, the holy desires you felt in your hearts, the stings of conscience when you had sinned, the sorrow and compunction that ensued, the wholesome thought of amendment, and the effectual resolution of returning to the Lord—these were all so many graces from God.

Add to all this the inestimable favour of being brought up in the true faith of Christ; for had we been born in the darkness of infidelity, amidst Pagan and unbelieving nations, in all appearance we should never have heard of the name of Christ, and consequently must have been deprived of the knowledge of him, who alone is “the way, the truth, and the life.” But the great God has been pleased, in his infinite mercy, to call us, from the earliest dawn of life, to “the admirable light of his Gospel,” and to place us, with his own hand, in the way that surely leads to eternal happiness. Now let me ask, should not our acknowledgments be unbounded, in proportion as those graces and blessings are unbounded? Have we not just reason to cry out, with the royal prophet, “Blessed be for ever and ever the name of the Lord?” who has treated us infinitely more mercifully than these unhappy nations which cover the wide surface of the earth, and are yet as buried in the shades of death.

However strong the motives are to excite our gratitude, from the number and excellence of the favours or graces bestowed on us, as well as the supreme dignity of the hand that bestows them, still another motive of great magnitude arises from a consideration that those great and inestimable graces we have so often received were the pure, gratuitous favours of the bounty and mercy of the Lord, which we could

never hope for, or pretend to, of ourselves, or obtain by any endeavours of our own : for the grace of God is never due to any merit or work of nature ; “ Otherwise grace were no longer grace,” as St. Paul says, “ but the just reward of our works.” Again he says—“ By grace we are saved, through faith ; and this not of ourselves, for it is the gift of God : not by works, that no one might boast.” So that whatever we have received, either as grace or favour, was purely the effect of the infinite mercy of Almighty God ; and those favours or graces he might as well have bestowed upon thousands of others, who certainly would have proved less unworthy than we.

But why does the Lord give his holy grace to some and refuse it to others ? Master as he is of the heart of man, and the manifold infallible assistances which are contained in the immense treasures of his mercy, why does he not always bestow those strong, powerful graces which never fail to rescue a sinner from the empire of sin, and lead him on surely to eternal happiness ? For what reason is one nation illustrated with the light of the Gospel, whilst others are left to the end of life in the ignorance and prejudices in which they were bred ? Why does not the sun of justice equally diffuse its shining beams over the whole surface of the earth, and not confine its happy influence to a few selected people ? In the contemplation of these profound mysteries human reason is lost ; and instead of presumptuously undertaking to discuss them, we should cry out with St. Paul : “ How inscrutable are thy judgments,” O Lord, “ and how unsearchable thy ways ?” He asks elsewhere : “ who was ever admitted into the secret councils of the Almighty, or who dare take upon him to give him advice ?” For us it is enough to know that Almighty God, in all his actions, is necessarily governed by justice and unerring wisdom. It is enough for us to know that he grants to all mankind the graces that are necessary and sufficient to work their salvation, and attain eternal happiness. This St. Paul assures us of : “ It is the will of God that all men be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth : ” so that if he deals sparingly by some, whilst he pours profusion on others, it is because he is pleased to do so, as being the great, independent, and uncontrollable master of his gifts.

For you it is enough to know, that each of you in particular has frequently received from Almighty God the most valuable blessings—blessings that would have converted thousands of others, and raised them to a high degree of piety and godliness. In a word, is it not enough for us to know, that

the Almighty intends, and sincerely wishes to give us all a place in his heavenly kingdom, by the many and effectual steps he has already taken towards this great end? Here, therefore, let us stand, "fastened to and grounded on this anchor of faith," as St. Paul says; and lay aside all vain, rash, and presumptuous researches about the dealings of God with regard to others. Let us humbly adore what we cannot comprehend; because, whatever a God does must be necessarily just and good. Let us gratefully acknowledge the favours we have received from the Lord, rather than arraign his wisdom or goodness for not having bestowed the same upon others. This is the first obligation we lie under, with regard to the grace of God; the next is, to comply faithfully therewith.

Almighty God being infinite in all his attributes, it cannot be questioned but his wisdom can devise, and his power effect an infinity of ways, infallible and sure, of subduing the most rebellious hearts, and of bringing them from sin to justice and godliness. He it is, as the Gospel says, that can change "the very stones into sons of Abraham;" that is, the most hardened sinners into righteous and godly men. Nor can it likewise be questioned but the Almighty has it in his power, not only to convert the most obdurate and stubborn hearts, but also to conduct them surely to the harbour of eternal life, in spite of all the opposition they can meet with from the fury of their infernal enemies, the wicked examples of this world, or the weakness or frailty of their own nature. Notwithstanding all this, it is an undoubted principle of our holy religion, that it is in the power of man to resist the strongest graces that are bestowed; as appears from what St. Stephen said to the Jew: "You always resist the Holy Ghost." This must necessarily be the case, otherwise the liberty of man would be destroyed under the motion and influence of grace, which is an error condemned by the Church of God. Therefore, as it is in the power of man to resist the grace of God, so it is in his power to comply faithfully therewith—and this power implies a strict obligation; for as every grace is an assistance from heaven, and granted for some virtuous end, it follows, Almighty God will bring us all to a severe account hereafter for abusing them, as is clearly laid down by Christ himself—"Woe be to thee, Corozain; woe unto thee, Bethsaida; because if the miracles had been done in Tyre and Sidon that have been wrought in you, they had long since done penance in sackcloth and ashes."

Let us now consider, my brethren, how much we have to fear from the justice of God on this account. Have we been

of the number of those faithful servants who kept not idle the talent they have received, but took care to lay it out to the greatest advantage? or have we not copied after that careless and indolent servant, who buried in the ground the talent that was given him, and thereby rendered ineffectual what, in the more careful and industrious hands, would prove a fruitful source of inexhaustible wealth? How often have we resisted the grace of God? How often, from the perverseness of our will, have we refused to comply with such pious emotions as the Spirit of Grace was pleased to produce in our hearts? Had we been always faithful to the manifold graces of the Lord, what improvements would we have not made in virtue? to what a high degree of sanctity would we not have risen? what treasures would we not have hoarded towards life everlasting? Let us now begin, and for the time to come show ourselves more faithful to the grace of God, otherwise we shall suffer: but how?—by being deprived of this divine grace we so frequently resist and abuse. This is the dreadful punishment the Almighty usually inflicts on all those who neglect to make the proper use of his holy grace, as Christ declares: “He that abounds shall receive more, but he that has nothing,” that is, he that has added nothing to what he had received, “shall even lose what he has.”

Nothing can be more just and reasonable than that the Almighty should withdraw his hand, and cease bestowing his favours upon men, who not only prove unworthy of them, but abuse and resist them. Is it not equally just those favours and graces should be transferred unto and bestowed upon others, who, by their faithful and constant compliance, make them fructify a hundred-fold? Has not our blessed Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, assured us in the Gospel, that “people shall come from the east and west to the enjoyment of heaven, whilst the children of the kingdom are cast forth and excluded from it.” By the preaching of the Gospel you are to become the children of the kingdom; and a sure pledge of this kingdom is given you by divine grace: but if you resist it—if you do not faithfully co-operate with it the Lord will withdraw it, and cast you forth; whilst he shall bestow it upon others, who, by good use thereof, shall become entitled to all the joys of the kingdom of heaven.

What greater misfortune can befall a Christian, than the loss of divine grace? What treasure so estimable? What loss so deplorable? This treasure includes every good; its loss every evil; as being a sure forerunner of eternal misery. For what is man without divine grace?—a compound of sin and

corruption, surrounded with dangers he cannot avoid, beset with enemies too strong to overcome, led away with passions he can neither quell nor gratify; in a word, one sunk under the completest misery, dead to all hopes of eternal life, and a victim doomed to the everlasting torments of hell.

Dreadful as it is, is not this the situation to which we are likely to be reduced? Is not the measure of our iniquities so far filled up as to force Almighty God to withdraw, I do not say all his¹ graces, for this were too severe and inconsistent with his unbounded mercy, but those strong and effectual graces which enable us to perform, and make us actually fulfil, every essential part of our duty to the very last moment of our lives? Is he not provoked, I say, to impart no other assistance but those common and feeble aids, whereby we may, but never will, arrive to the kingdom of God? The only way to prevent this great, this inexpressible misfortune, is, as St. Paul directs, “not to receive the grace of God in vain;” that is, in other words, to comply faithfully therewith.

But as this requires a most powerful grace, let us unanimously apply for it to the Almighty God, saying, with the great St. Augustine, “Give us, O Lord, what you command, and command what you will.” Treat us with as much severity as you please, but do not, at any time, withdraw your holy grace from us. As long as you condescend to enlighten our minds—to move and excite our hearts, so long we may repent; but if you withdraw your holy grace, all hope is lost; all is lost, and eternal perdition must ensue. Our infidelity to your graces, we confess, deserves such severe punishment; but your mercies, O my God! are beyond our ingratitude or weakness. Let it not be in vain that we receive and profess the true faith of Christ. Let it not be in vain that we have so often shared in your holy graces. Let that predilection you have shown us, “O ancient Beauty!” in calling us early, and preserving us hitherto in your saving faith, extend to the last moment of life; that, after praising and adoring the name of Christ, the Author of all grace, upon earth, we may eternally share in his glory and triumphs in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

SERMON VIII.

ON HELL.

“How terrible is this place!”—Gen. c. xviii., v. 17.

THE existence of a place in which the enemies of God in this life are punished in the next, and the eternity of its pains, are the pillars of the Christian religion, and a doctrine held among the faithful since the earliest ages of the world. Man, formed for happiness, has by nature a strong aversion to pain, and hastily turns aside from the contemplation, even in idea, of those scenes which may possibly prove the woful source of pain and anguish hereafter. Hence that cold indifference, that languid zeal, with which most people receive the warm and charitable admonitions of the ministers of God, when they represent the horrid consequences of a life of sin to the sinner, and the necessity of penance. But in proportion as this indifference appears remarkable, the necessity appears the greater of awakening by terror him whom sin has allured into a fatal indifference or security. For this purpose I feel it incumbent on me, this evening, to entertain you, not with the wisdom and goodness of God in creating the whole universe with one Almighty fiat, which his power governs, and rules, and upholds; not with reproaches for your ingratitude in repeatedly insulting and provoking this great God of power, by your manifold sins, and resisting his frequent calls by the preaching of the word and the inward motions of his grace; not, I say, with the contemplation of the joys of heaven reserved for the true followers of Jesus Christ, in bearing their cross, after his example, during the short period of life here below, in meekness, humility, patience, and suffering; but in laying before you—especially you, O sinner! a faithful view of that place of torture which the Almighty has made in the next life, for the exercise of his justice upon sinners, commonly called HELL.

To the contemplation of the horrors of that place of woe, I solicit your most favourable attention. Clouds of darkness, I know, conceal from human view and from human comprehension, a just knowledge of the pains of hell. The knowledge of man is limited, and therefore cannot comprehend, much less express, anything that is infinite. Aided by the Spirit of God, and enlightened by his word in the holy Scriptures. let us descend alive into hell, as St. Bernard advises, and religiously contemplate the sufferings of the damned, that they may influence our conduct, and prevent us from experi-

encing them in reality hereafter. Let us examine "how terrible is this place," in order thereby to create in our hearts a holy "fear of the Lord," which the royal prophet says, "is the beginning of wisdom." One of the most effectual and usual snares of the enemy of mankind is to remove the thoughts, and destroy, if possible, the belief of a hell, whereby men are deceived by a false security, and pushed on, blindfolded, or, as if in a dream, until at length they awake in the experimental knowledge of its sufferings. From such fatal delusion, from such knowledge, Lord God! do thou deliver us. Since thy abundant mercies, and the great and glorious kingdom thou hast prepared for those that love thee, are insufficient to make us forsake sin and error, let the terror of thy judgments, of thy uplifted arm over the damned in hell, so fill us with a holy fear of thy anger, that henceforward we may for ever forsake everything displeasing to thee, O my God! and by a life of penance, avoid knowing, but in speculation, what hell is, and what the damned suffer there. As I have hinted, great uncertainty lies before us respecting the particular place of hell, and the nature of the torments therein, but sufficient it is for your instruction to know, first—the existence of hell, and secondly—that the torments therein are extreme.

First—The general prevalence of impiety and irreligion, the decay of morals in a country once celebrated for sanctity, exhibit an idea of a people professing religion without faith, or denying by their lives the doctrine they profess. Wasting away their days in the pursuit of pleasure, and the gratification of animal sense, they shut their eyes, and seem insensible to an hereafter, or that the criminal actions of this life will be punished in the next. Hell to them is a mystery which they wish not to touch on; but lest they may hereafter feel what hell is, let them attend to me in exploring its existence, and strive to avoid it by a true change of life.

By hell we understand a secret, unknown, but horrid place of suffering, "a place of torments," which Jesus Christ calls it, in the Gospel of St. Luke, where those who die in mortal sin are, eternally punished in a manner more severe than can be imagined. The declarations of Christ on this subject, and the circumstances attending such declarations, are so clear and strong, as leave no room to doubt they could be understood in any other than an obvious and literal sense. "Those," says Christ, (meaning the reprobated) "shall go into eternal torments: begone, ye accursed, into eternal fire." The plain, distinct, intelligible manner in which the word of God speaks, is the fullest refutation of the objection raised of late by impious

and designing men. The word "eternal," say they, is to be understood in a figurative sense, and means no more than an immense duration of time. But the circumstance wherein Jesus Christ speaks must remove such an objection; for you must observe, in this passage he relates the solemn, definitive sentence he is to pronounce at the end of the world on the whole race of mankind. Now a last, supreme, irrevocable sentence must necessarily be comprised in such clear, decisive terms, as to leave no room for doubt or misconception. Besides, be pleased to take notice, that in the same sentence Christ our Saviour makes mention of the everlasting felicity of the just, as well as the interminable sufferings of the reprobated; and as this felicity was never understood to be confined by any limits of time, but to extend to all eternity, whilst God is God, how can any one presume to put a forced construction upon the words of Christ, and attribute a meaning which they never did, never could bear? If hell were only a region of transient suffering, if it had its limits, however remote, in point of existence, the damned would in reality one day be released; but, according to the oracles of holy Writ, this can never be. Besides, God could not be God without creating hell, in order to satisfy his justice in punishing sin, which, being an attack upon the Divinity, contracts thereby an infinite malice; and as it is an article of faith that after death we become incapable of merit or demerit, it follows, that a soul quitting the body in mortal sin, remains for ever in that same identical state, without alteration, increase, or diminution; and must, of course, become the eternal victim of the justice of heaven, in the horrible gulf of hell.

The unerring Church of God, always guided by the Holy Ghost, has anathematised, from the beginning, all those who held or maintained a contrary opinion on this subject. Soon as corruption began to spread in the Christian world, there arose proud, stubborn, licentious men, who, breaking down the barriers of morality, presumptuously called in question all such tenets as stood in opposition to their lives. But their iniquitous projects were soon confounded, and truth restored to its primitive rights: for the eternal punishments that are decreed for all those who die in disgrace with God were strenuously asserted, and delivered down from age to age, as an essential part of divine revelation. But how can these eternal punishments be reconciled with the infinite goodness of God? Who is the man that dares call the Almighty to an account for his actions? or "which of us has been ever introduced," as St. Paul says, "into the secret

and impenetrable councils of the Divinity?" Almighty God has certainly revealed this essential point of faith : we know from himself that he has fixed a place for unrepenting sinners, where everlasting torments shall be their portion ; and what God does must surely be founded on justice.

Although the authorities drawn from the Scriptures be sufficient to satisfy the inquiring mind relative to the existence of hell, divines go still farther in reasoning upon the wisdom and justice of God, in appointing a place, and allotting eternal sufferings for the punishment of sin. God, say they, created the whole world for his own glory : he could not have created it for any other end. As this glory could not be obtained but by an exact and constant obedience to his divine laws, the wisdom of God required he should employ the most effectual means for this end : such means, however, as were agreeable to the nature and liberty of man. What means were these? Rewards and punishments. What punishments: terrestrial and transitory? No; this would never have answered the views of God—for if now, when we see the deep abyss of hell opening wide beneath our feet, and the wrath of heaven flaming over our heads ; if now, when we know eternal woes to be the dreadful pay of sin, so very few are found who show their submission to the laws of God, how great and universal would the corruption be, were this restraint taken off, and our disobedience punished with anything short of the devouring flames of hell ! In a supposition of this kind, I do not hesitate to say, the very name of submission or virtue would be unknown in the world : it was therefore highly justifiable in the Almighty to adopt such methods as must have secured his own glory, by compelling mankind, by terror, where his love was inoperative, to a due subjection to his holy laws.

This wise and just disposition of Providence becomes the more remarkable, as, in the opinion of the fathers, the glory of God becomes no less exalted by the reprobation of the wicked, and their condemnation to hell, than, as St. Austin says, from the exaltation of the elect, and the glory bestowed on them in heaven ; for if here he displays his mercy, there he shows his justice (two essential attributes in a God) ; here he shows his unbounded goodness and the immense treasures of his glory, there the terrible effects of his wrath ; here he is the glorious rewarder of virtue, there the severe and inexorable avenger of vice ; here, in fine, he rules over man by the charms of his love, but there he punishes by the force of unresisted power ; whereby is plainly seen the uncontrollable

empire which the sovereign Lord and Master of things has a right to exert over all the works of his hands.

Pursuing these reflections, those men remarkable in all ages of the Church for their learning and piety, who have made, and do make the law of God the object of their studies, the rule of their conduct—divines, I say, observe, that since God was pleased to decree punishment for sin, he must have observed a just proportion, and of course ordained that punishment eternal ; for sin, being an attack upon the supreme majesty of God, who is infinite in all his perfections, contracts by that attack, as I have suggested to you before, a degree of criminality infinitely great, and consequently deserves, as well as positively incurs, an infinite punishment. Now, this punishment cannot be infinitely great in measure (as their language runs), man being too narrow a sphere for the unlimited power of God to exert itself upon, therefore, it must be infinitely great in duration—it must be eternal or everlasting. Observe this, sinners ! you who make so little of insulting the majesty of God by multiplied and repeated crimes, by cursing and swearing by that awful Name the sound of which claims the homage and veneration of all creatures in heaven, on earth, and in hell—a Name which equally constitutes the joy of the blessed as the terror of the damned : observe what sin is, you drunkards ! you sensual and worldly men ! you Christians ! for whom mercy is yet in store, provided, by a sincere change of life, you call for mercy whilst mercy is attainable ; observe, I say, the consequences of sin unrepented of, even one sin—for example, a sin in thought, or the criminal enjoyment of one moment—eternal punishment. The justice of God decreed it ; the justice of God is right. To conceive the horror of sin, to conceive the malice of sin, much less to express it, is not within the compass of human understanding. I know the effects of sin, but I cannot comprehend the malice of sin. The eternal wisdom of my God conceived it, else he would never have revealed it unto man. Our not understanding the mysteries of our faith proves only our ignorance or weakness, but not the uncertainty or falsehood of what we believe.

To compare great things with small : suppose, for instance, a great and powerful prince had been publicly insulted by one of the lowest and meanest of his subjects, no punishment would be thought too severe to atone for the atrociousness of the offence. If this be deemed both just and equitable, when a mortal man alone is offended, can any punishment be considered too severe which falls upon those

who offend, insult, and wage war against the great and eternal King of heaven? But comparisons are inadequate to illustrate this dark, mysterious point. The dignity of my God, and the glory that surrounds his throne, expose the folly of comparison. But true it is, that sin, being a direct violation of the law of God, contracts a species of infinity from the infinity of the great Being it offends. "Was it not very just," inquires the great St. Austin, "that endless torments should be reserved for those who wish to enjoy unlawful pleasures without end?" Endless torments are certainly due to sin; and equally certain it is, that endless torments would have been the certain lot of all the descendants of Adam, in consequence of the sin of Adam, and of their own personal sins, had not the love of Jesus Christ interposed in our favour. In his ignominy, in his humiliations, in his sufferings upon the cross, consider what sin is, what hell is, what heaven is.

So black and foul is sin, that were all the angels in heaven, and all the just upon earth, to lay down their lives in atonement to the divine justice for one mortal sin, that sin would not be blotted out; because the infinite justice of God required infinite satisfaction, which no finite being could give. Jesus Christ, therefore, the second person of the Most Holy Trinity, God from all eternity, became man, as related in the Gospel, and by his merits and sufferings, under the appearance of a sinner, not only blotted out sin and rescued us from hell, but moreover, purchased our primitive title to the kingdom of heaven, provided we fulfil his holy laws. But the deplorable perversity of a sinner is such, that notwithstanding the obedience and love he owes God, in return for his unbounded love towards him; notwithstanding the injunctions he lays down for him, with heaven on the one hand, and hell on the other; notwithstanding the uncontrollable power and inflexible justice of the sovereign Lord of the universe, by sin he rejects the favour of God and the possession of heaven, and also accepts of his eternal abode in hell.

On hell thus have the fathers reasoned, and sufficient is this to remove any seeming difficulty that may attend this fundamental point of our faith. An inquiry into the particular place where hell is, is equally useless as vain: useless, because the knowledge thereof can be attended with no salutary consequence; and vain, because vain and frivolous is all inquiry grounded on conjecture. In the holy Scriptures hell is called by various names: "The lake of the wrath of God—a pool of fire and brimstone."—Rev. "A land of darkness and misery."—Job. All which are but terms merely

conformable to our ideas of what is terrible. But it is generally believed, and this belief is supported by the parable of Dives in the Gospel, that hell is extremely remote, or in direct opposition to heaven. It is related that those above (meaning the blessed) cannot descend to the residence of Dives, nor can he ascend where Abraham is, on account of a prodigious gulf or distance. Now the terms descend and ascend are well understood, and lead to the belief that heaven is placed far beyond all the works of the creation, and that hell lies below us, or under our feet. Whether under our feet means the centre of this globe, or any other orb in the planetary or celestial system, is an hypothesis more likely to gratify idle speculation than useful knowledge. The knowledge I wish to convey to you will prove useful, if, carrying in your recollection the existence of hell, the eternity of its torments, which are never to be lessened, and that "out of hell there is no redemption," you effectually reform your lives, leave off sinning, and return, though late, to the Lord your God. "Remember your last things," says the Spirit of God—death, judgment, hell, and heaven—"and you will never sin."

Getting up and lying down, morning and evening, amidst your ordinary occupations of life, but especially when any temptation, or even suggestion to sin, attacks you, remember the burning flames of hell, which were made for sin alone. Recollect that a consent to that temptation or this suggestion, may induce Almighty God to cut short your life by a sudden death, or that the earth may open under your feet, as it did under Core, and swallow you up alive into hell. Forsake, then, in future, all unlawful pleasure—refrain from drunkenness, lest God may call you drunk to judgment; from all injustice, for he is the God of justice; from imprecations, from blasphemy, for holy is his name, and all the angels in heaven unceasingly call him Holy! holy! holy! from lewd and obscene discourses and scandalous conversations. Ah! why will you expose yourselves to eternal perdition for the empty gratification of one moment? No, my dear brethren, do not. Return back to the Lord your God. Return to him who calls on you from the cross; who keeps open the gate of heaven, and tenderly invites you to enter in. Remember the greatest sinners have proved the greatest saints. The fear of hell brought them back to a true sense of their danger; and what began through fear, ended in charity, or the love of God. The fear of hell has peopled the deserts with austere hermits and venerable anchorites, who fled from the snares of life. The fear of hell has made savage forests, bleak mountains,

lonely valleys, dismal solitudes, and frightful caverns, resound with lamentations of penance and the sweet harmony of praise and jubilation. We all deserved hell more than once, as every mortal sin made is liable to hell-fire. Our good God has hitherto spared us, in patient expectation of our amendment. He has given us time; he now offers grace and forgiveness. Beware of abusing his present invitation; beware of that place of woe announced in the Scriptures, asserted by the Church, and founded on the most essential attributes of God—his glory, his goodness, and his justice—for the pains of hell are no less certain in their existence than dreadful in their nature, as I come now to lay before you.

Second—Hell would be no longer that terrible place announced in the holy writings, had not pain, and the eternal existence of that pain, combined and mutually co-operated to render it terrible beyond the reach of expression. The pains of hell are twofold in their nature—the pain of loss and the pain of sense or human comprehension. The pain of loss consists in being deprived of that sovereign good—Almighty God; and that supreme happiness—heaven, for which the soul was made.

The correct notion she has, in her immortal state, of the beauty and charms of God, are such, that the most vehement desires of an union with him, which the reprovèd can never obtain, tear and torment her most cruelly. I have no idea that can convey to you any correct notion how great the anguish is of a soul repelled from an union with God. Encumbered on earth with a heavy load of flesh, which undoubtedly obscures the functions of the soul, we imperfectly know but little of her faculties, and that little chiefly by the operation of the senses—disencumbered of the body, the full perfections of her nature blaze out, and the first act of her new state is a violent impulse to the great Author of her being, the Fountain of Happiness. The loss of God in the next life may at present make little impression on your minds; but, in the opinion of divines, it will cause greater pain than all the other torments of hell united!

Born for happiness, happiness is our strongest pursuit—and, disguise it under what colours we may, happiness is the principle that governs and animates every action of ours in life. The various amusements, and other decoys of life, so far blunt the edge that necessarily attends this passion, that during the existence of mortality its propelling powers are unknown. But when disengaged from the body, and no longer liable to the impositions of the senses, then this passion bursts forth in its

full extent. The soul then knows the beauty and perfections of her great Maker ; but she knows, also, that for her sins here on earth she is for ever cut off from any intercourse with him, but as a victim for his avenging justice. The greatness of her loss, and the greatness of the folly that caused this loss, are two ideas that seize her, and that never cease tormenting her ; the one with black despair—the other with bitter self-reproaches : “ The clear vision of God, the joys of heaven, the incomprehensible glory the just and good are now in possession of, were once for me ; but are for me no more ! ” That thought will pierce her more than fire, and make her torments double. What is more, she shall never be able to forget it. But listen : “ My dream of life is over. I have spent it in pleasures, in opulence, and honour. What avail they now ?—Miseries. By whose fault ?—My own.” This is the worm that shall not cease tormenting them. “ Their worm dieth not,” says St. Mark. The worm of conscience lays before them continually the magnitude of their loss, and the magnitude of their folly. The distraction caused in the mind by the most calamitous events in life, can but ill represent the agony of the damned for their exclusion from heaven ; yet, as confusion and misery are seen to follow from the humiliation of the great and the exalted here below, I shall relate one instance or two of this. King Assuerus, one of the successors of those princes who overturned the Chaldean empire, had raised to honours far beyond any princes of his extensive empire, his favourite counsellor, Aman. The ambition, however, of this distinguished prince still aspired to higher honours. The king consulted him how he should honour one whom he intended to honour ; and Aman, imagining himself the object of the king’s regards, advised that he should be clothed in the royal garments, and his horse led by the first prince of the empire through the city of Susan. “ Do so by Mardochai,” said the king. So Prince Aman was obliged to lead Mardochai’s horse ; and the Scripture says, he returned home “ mourning, and his head covered.” Conceive, if you can, the pain of mind a sovereign prince must feel on being pulled down from his throne, and degraded below any one of his subjects. Such has been the case with Sedecias, king of Judea, against whom Nebuchodonosor fought ; and when Jerusalem was on the point of being taken, he fled by night, but being pursued, was taken on the plains of Jericho. On being brought before the king, his enemy, he first ordered the sons of Sedecias to be slain in the father’s presence, and after that, his own eyes to be plucked out. In this miserable condition, reduced from his royal rank and loaded with heavy

chains, was he brought to Babylon. Humiliations so cruel must have been more afflicting to Sedecias than the severest death. But if this be the consequence of losing a perishable crown, what concern, what anxiety must the damned feel for the loss of the kingdom of heaven.

To the interior anguish of the mind arising from the pain of loss, the damned must feel the anguish arising from the immediate action of fire, called the pain of sense. As we are all to resume our bodies at the day of judgment, the Almighty God has instituted and ordained the fire of hell, chiefly to punish the body, which had been the base instrument of iniquity upon earth. Fancy, therefore, unto yourselves a vast ocean of fire, according to the beautiful figure of St. John in the Revelations, and all the reprovèd plunged, both soul and body, into this burning pool. Fancy to yourselves how this fire must penetrate, in one instant, their flesh, their bones, the marrow of the bones, and reduce them all into one flaming mass of fire. Here are they for ever burning, but never consuming. "The same fire that consumes them," says Tertullian, "by a surprising miracle of the justice of God, renews continually the substance of their bodies, to make them a new and constant prey to new and continual fires." It must be so, my brethren; it must be a fire differing from all other fires; a fire blown up by the flaming wrath of an exasperated God: a fire that shall punish, that shall torment, that shall overwhelm in woe all those who despise his authority, and trample on his laws here on earth.

On earth all pain and sorrow are limited. Beyond a certain degree human nature cannot suffer. Besides, pain is intermitted here, and is followed by casual comfort. Were it possible for all the sufferings arising from indignities, sickness, or pain, to which human nature is liable, were they all united and centred in one person, still that person should have the comfort (and a great comfort it is) that one time or other these sufferings would end. At worst they must end with life. Besides, the consolation of a friend, the light of day, balmy sleep, pity, and other auxiliaries, all contribute to remove perfect misery from all human woes. But into hell hope never enters—no mitigation, no relaxation. Clothed in immortality as well as the blessed in heaven, immortal torments are their lot. Their consoling, pitying friends—devils, who aggravate their torments by their hideous figures and horrid yells. Cries and groans and tears and gnashing of teeth, mutual and self-reproaches, maledictions, and blasphemies are their eternal

occupations. There shall the glutton—there shall those insensible to the claims of the poor—there shall the drunkard, who makes a god of his belly, cry out with Dives, “O how we are tormented in these flames !” There shall the blasphemer call out, but call in vain, for one drop of water to cool his tongue : that tongue given him to speak the praises of his great Creator, but which in direct opposition to his command, he has made the foul instrument of cursing, swearing, lying, and backbiting, shall then be cruelly but justly burned and inflamed. The voluptuous shall feel new and unheard of torments in their bowels. Those wicked hands, employed in life in stripping the widow and orphan, in violently opposing might to right, shall then be bound in everlasting chains. “They shall be salted with fire ;” the burning fire of God’s anger shall salt them and miraculously preserve them from consumption or decay, in order to become the eternal victims of his inflamed justice. The brain shall boil for all the bad thoughts, evil designs, wicked counsels, bad advice, and all the black catalogue of crimes which originate there. Distraction and madness shall not come to its relief : I mean that madness and distraction attended by a derangement of the intellectual faculties. No ; the miserable recollection of what the soul lost, shall add double fires to what she feels. The heart formed for the love of the Creator, but abused by a criminal attachment to, and love of the creature, shall there burn, not with the chaste fires of divine love, but with the unquenchable fires of God’s hatred !

The sinner, St. John speaks in his Revelations, “shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled with pure wine in the cup of his wrath, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone.” Something inflammatory and overpowering, possessing largely the qualities of brimstone, shall increase the fires the sinner shall feel. He shall not possess those evils in a small degree, like sipping at a vessel. He shall largely partake of them. He shall “drink ;” he shall feel the avenging hand of God vindicating his justice, in adding to those evils “which are mingled with pure wine in the cup of his wrath.”

Could we, protected by a special Providence, view the horrid caverns of hell, there should we see involved in greater calamities than I have mentioned, many of our acquaintances and friends, perhaps relations, whom the justice of God called out of this life. Then should they say what I now say to you, Beware of this place of woe. Take example—take counsel—do not wait to learn in hell “how horrible it is to fall into

the hands of the living God." Begin this day to forsake the broad way of the world, which surely ends in hell. Begin and take up a life of penance, for short and uncertain is the term of life, and the end of penance is joy. Take up the cross and the commandments, which you have so often by your conduct trampled under foot, and they will surely lead you to life everlasting. For, let me ask you with the prophet Isaias, "Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Unless thy mercy calls us to a speedy repentance, which of us, Lord God, shall escape that "fire"—those "burnings?" Which of you, let me ask, could endure to hold his little finger for five minutes over a candle? I don't know what consideration could induce the poorest of you, my brethren, to do so.

Reflect, then, I beseech you, on hell, where pain is torture, and torture agony. Have pity on your own souls, and save them, by a true conversion from the terrible fire of hell, compared to which St. Austin says: "the fire of this life is like a painted fire." "Your enemy, the devil, like a roaring lion, is constantly roaming about, seeking whom to devour; resist him," St. Peter desires you. Turn to the Lord and call on him for aid. If in heaven he be the great rewarder of virtue, the dreadful avenger of sin in hell, on earth he is the patient, forbearing, tender Father, calling and wishing the return of his strayed children. To us he has been much more merciful than to thousands upon thousands, who now lie buried in hell for lesser crimes than we have committed. Should he call us out of this world this night, O Jesus, how deplorable would be our case! Return then, I say; forsake your evil ways, and return unto the Lord your God. Do penance whilst penance is acceptable, lest the dreadful night of eternity should open on you, and sufferings without fruit, without measure, without end, should seize you.

Hell would no longer be that terrible place I have endeavoured to lay before you, but for the eternity of its torments. From this eternity alone you are to form a true notion of hell. But when I am unable by reason to comprehend, much less to calculate by any art the full term of that dreadful sound—ETERNITY—how shall I impress you with any correct notion relative thereto? I amuse you with calculations, but these, in attempting to penetrate eternity, only expose the ignorance as well as the folly of such attempt. I may demand your steady attention to comprehend numbers—and numbers, to a certain degree, may be comprehended—but in eternity numbers are lost. You may comprehend the extension of one

year, composed of months, days, hours, minutes, and seconds of time; you may comprehend a thousand years, or even a million of years, composed of the small particles of seconds. Suppose now a million of ages for every second of time in a million of years; this would form an extent of time beyond human comprehension. Were the pains of hell to end with this term, though extremely remote, hell would lose the greatest curse it is afflicted with, and the hope of deliverance would console the damned in their torments. But all hope is cut off, for when this column of time shall have passed over, eternity then will be but beginning.

Now I dare say it would be found very unpleasant to be tied down for one's life, suppose thirty or forty years, on a bed of roses. If laid on a bed of thorns how much more dreadful! But hell, the dreadful abode of the damned, shall continue invariably to torment with inexpressible pains, every part, both in soul and body, of the miserable victims, for a period beyond the reach of calculation or human comprehension—for ETERNITY. The Holy Ghost says so by the pen of St. John: "And the smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever, neither have they rest day nor night." Lord God! why dost thou mention "day," where no day, but eternal night and everlasting horror dwell? To let you see the uniformity, the regularity, the constancy of their torments—"Their worm shall never die, and their fire shall never be quenched." For though day succeeds night and night day with us, with them all is horrid darkness, horrid pain, horrid ETERNITY.

Full fifty ages are passed away, and more too, since the murderer of his brother, the unhappy Cain, became the sad victim of the fire of hell, and yet he feels, and suffers, and moans as much this instant as in the first moment of his immersion. He is only beginning his sufferings. Eternity lies before him, and for eternity he must suffer without hope or mitigation. Where time ends, there eternity begins, for in eternity time is swallowed up. The dreadful thoughts of eternity, attended by eternal pain, are sufficient to strike terror into the most undaunted hearts.

You brave, courageous, undaunted sinners—you who now abuse the abundant mercies of the Lord, waiting for your repentance, how shall you withstand the extended arm of the Lord, stretched out in vengeance over you for eternity? Why then do you resist his calls, his invitations? His tender mercies now invite you to the ways that lead to life everlasting. To repentance he invites you; but he invites like a

God : he offers mercy, but he threatens vengeance ; for “every tree that brings not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into fire.”

Before we take leave of this “land of darkness, covered with the gloomy shades of death, where” Job says, “no order but eternal horror and confusion dwell,” where to the pain of loss is added the pain of sense, and both eternal—let us pause a while, in order to draw some useful lesson. That lesson is pointed out by Jesus Christ himself : “if thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off.” Cut off sin by the root, which scandalizes thee before God and his angels, and cast it off. Cut off cursing and swearing, lies, fraud, slander, intemperance, drunkenness, all injustice and idleness. Cut up your passions by the root. Cast away bad company, bad words, evil thoughts ; and unchaste looks. Forsake the region of death where you live. Return by penance. Call on Jesus, and he will hear you ; for he says, “It is better for thee to enter lame into life everlasting, than having two feet to be cast into the hell of unquenchable fire.” From this fire, Almighty God, do thou deliver us ; and receive in mercy thy servants returning to thee. We acknowledge thy power in creating, and thy justice in inflicting the pains of hell for the punishment of sin, and that often, very often, we deserved to feel the terrible effects of thy justice. As thou hast spared, spare us still—still let thy protecting mercy cover us ; that atoning by our future lives for the follies and crimes of the past, we may not only escape the ever burning flames of hell, but likewise receive admittance, through Jesus Christ, into the glorious kingdom of heaven. Amen.

SERMON IX.

ON THE WORD OF GOD.

“The sower went forth to sow his seed.”—LUKE, c. viii., v. 5.

It is easy to conceive what high and pleasing expectations this careful and vigilant husbandman must have entertained at this time of his provident industry. After choosing the most proper season of the year, employing the best seed, and bestowing all the care and industry he was capable of, he goes forth, the Gospel says : “He went forth to sow his seed,” full of the hopes of the rich fruits he had a right to expect from his toils and labours. But unhappily the harvest was small—for it is related that part of the seed fell by the way side, and

was trodden upon, and the birds of the air came and ate it up. Another part fell upon stony ground; and having shot up, it withered, because it had not moisture. Another part fell among thorns, and the thorns growing up together, choked it. But the last part fell upon good ground, and having grown up, yielded fruit a hundred fold.

This mysterious parable, as related by Jesus Christ himself, he was pleased also to expound, and in the exposition you will see what daily passes before your eyes. The seed, says Christ, is the word of God; and they by the way side are those who hear it; then the devil comes and takes away the seed, lest believing, they should be saved. They upon stony ground, are those who, when they have heard it, receive the word with joy; and these have no root who believe for a while, and in the time of temptation fall back. And that part which fell upon thorns, are they who have heard, and going away, are entangled with the cares, the riches, and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit. But that upon good ground are they, who with a good, a very good heart, hearing the word, retain it, and with patience bring forth fruit. Behold, here, the precious advantages of hearing the word of God as it should be heard; of receiving it as it should be received; because it brings forth fruit a hundred fold, infinite in value, infinite in duration. Besides contemplating the advantages, behold, also, the sad calamities that flow from hearing it, and neglecting by virtuous actions to bring forth fruit; the devil comes, and banishing it from the mind, takes possession of his own habitation; temptation comes—the word of God is forgotten; virtue is weak—all is lost. Next come the friends of hell, transformed into angels of light—the occupations, the cares, the riches and the pleasures of this world, which choke up the word of God, in its bud, and blast it in its birth. Thus the seed intended by the husbandman, Jesus Christ, to bring forth fruit that should ripen for eternity, is rendered sterile; and becomes by abuse the evident cause of all the evils and vices that disgrace Europe this day, and this country in particular. From the grand elevation to which the word of God, cherished, would undoubtedly have raised us, how low are we reduced by abusing it! To remedy this abuse for the future, I shall lay before you—

First, the excellence of the word of God; and

Secondly, the means of making it profitable to our souls.

From the knowledge we have, O Lord, of our weakness and inability, do thou assist us by thy powerful grace, that the word of life, which I am bound this day to proclaim to thy

servants here assembled, may sink deep in their hearts, reform their lives, and produce fruits worthy of eternal life !

First—The excellence of the word of God, or preaching, will appear from two considerations ; first, that it is a real intimation of the will of God, and next, that it is a powerful means of procuring our eternal salvation.

That preaching is an intimation, and the usual channel of conveying to the faithful the will of God, appears from its institution, and from the universal practice of the ministers of the Gospel, from the foundation of Christianity. Jesus Christ, by his blessed example, instituted and afterwards commissioned his apostles, and all their lawful successors to the end of the world : “Go,” says he, “and teach all nations.” This high commission is what St. Paul means, in writing to the Corinthians, “Let a man so look upon us, not as men who act in a private or common capacity: No; but as the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God.” And again “We are therefore ambassadors of Christ: God as if it were exhorting by us :” that is to say, teaching and instructing by our ministry; and lest any one should imagine that these words were applicable to the apostles alone, and not equally to their successors, St. Paul tells that, “our Saviour hath appointed in his Church, some apostles, some doctors, some pastors, and others prophets;” otherwise, men whose province it is to teach and expound unto the flock of Christ the saving truths of the Gospel. So that, any man who is charged by his lawful superior with “the ministry of the word,” as St. Paul styles it, is in reality an ambassador of Christ, inasmuch as he is sent by the Representative of Christ upon earth, the Head of the Church by legal authority, to announce unto the people the kingdom of God.

As often, therefore, as you hear a man deputed by the Church announcing the truths of the Gospel, you should look upon his words, and attend to them, as the words of life: because they are in reality the words which Jesus Christ hath announced unto us, in the person of his representative upon earth, to announce unto others. Let our private failings be what they may; though want of abilities may depreciate some, and frailties others; though much inferior in talents and natural endowments to many of our hearers; we are, notwithstanding all this, “the assistants of God,” as St. Paul expresses it, “in the conversion of souls, and the completing the ministry to the perfecting of the saints.” Who could have greater failings than the Scribes and Pharisees, whom our Saviour compares to so many painted sepulchres, which,

at the very time that they exhibit to the eye the fairest outside, are nothing within but stench and putrefaction? Yet Christ ordered his disciples to hear them with respect, attention, and docility. Why so? Because they were seated on the chair of Moses; or, in other words, because they were authorised and commissioned to deliver, and explain the law of Moses unto the people. Because, holding the chair of Moses, they, in the Old Law, in explaining the prophets, fulfilled that branch of our function under the new, namely, preaching the word of God.

Let no consideration, therefore, ever hinder you from paying a due regard to the word of God. Eloquence, indeed, is very apt to create and command esteem. The graces of speech, genteel delivery, becoming action, with all the ornaments of discourse, are very pleasing to the mind and ear: but all this when weighed in the scale of reason, is no more than an empty sound; the short-lived work, and insignificant creation of man. Whereas the words of life we deliver from this chair of truth, as ministers of Christ, carry along with them, independently of any care or industry of our own, the greatest weight and energy; and, of course, are more worthy of esteem than the most elaborate productions of any other kind. They are not the words of man, but of Christ; the real intimation of his will, and likewise the most powerful means of procuring our eternal salvation.

This we may easily infer from many instances, both in the Old and the New Law. As often as the Jews rebelled against the Almighty, what methods were employed to recall them from their errors to a just obedience to God? Preaching alone. The Lord always sent them prophets, that is to say, men full of his own Spirit, who possessed that warmth of zeal which was requisite to upbraid them with their ingratitude, reproach them with their disorders, and lay before them the dreadful consequences that must attend their continuing any longer in their disobedience to God. Upon the frequent and pathetic remonstrances those prophets made, the Jews seldom or never failed to acknowledge their transgressions, bewail them with bitterness, and sincerely return unto the Lord. This sincere return always did, as it always will, draw down the mercies of heaven; and as often as they returned, so often were they forgiven.

Was it not by preaching that the Christian religion was established all over the known and habitable world, notwithstanding the opposition it met with from the fury of hell, the false wisdom of this world, the dreadful war of vice, and the

corruption of the heart of man? Yes: it was by the ministry of the word that the empire of idolatry was overturned, the sway of passion checked and restrained; the domination of sin and error prostrated, and the reign of virtue and godliness established upon the most solid and unshaken foundations. Read the Epistles of St. Paul, and you will be astonished how many great nations and countries, differing from each other as well in climate as in their language, laws, and customs, have been converted to the faith by his preaching alone. At the two first sermons of St. Peter, you are told by St. Luke, that three thousand were converted at the one, and five thousand at the other. But how many thousands of thousands did not twenty-four years of his assiduous apostolic labours, and the collected labours in preaching and teaching of the College of Apostles in the different regions of the world, bring in to the fold of Christ? What wonders have been done in Asia, by the preaching of St. Francis Xavier, and even at home here by St. Patrick. Is it not by the preaching of a few apostolic men, that new and large additions are daily made, both in the East and West Indies, to the spiritual kingdom of Christ? There is not any year of our lives but thousands of souls are brought over, by the preaching of the Gospel, from the darkness of idolatry or infidelity in which they had been buried, "to the admirable light of faith," as St. Paul calls it.

Is it not by preaching that the spirit of religion is nourished and kept alive among those who had imbibed its principles in their earliest infancy? Wherever preaching is obstructed religion is on the decline. It droops and languishes, like a dying flame, which for want of nourishment grows fainter and fainter, until reduced at length so low as barely to subsist; but soon as the word of God is restored, religion revives and shines in full lustre; like the morning sun, which appears more bright and beautiful because it lay concealed for some time from our sight. Consult your own experience on this head; look back into those times when the word of God was scarcely heard. What a situation was religion in? If since there be any change, attribute the glory to none but God; for as the apostle says, "It is neither he that plants, nor he that waters the tender plants, but God alone that gives the increase." The providence of God is then the great principle that, directing the operations of his holy word on the hearts of men, brings about a thorough change and reformation in morals, and finally becomes the great means of their salvation.

To a sincere conversion, my brethren, and of course, to

salvation, what are usually the two greatest obstacles? Is it not blindness in the understanding, and corruption in the heart, which frequently increase to that degree as to make us love and cherish the disorders to which we are slaves? Now certainly the word of God is a most powerful means of removing those obstacles, as it is clear that nothing is more capable of banishing all darkness and ignorance from the mind, since we are thereby instructed in every part of our duty towards God, our neighbour, and ourselves. Is it not from the pulpit you are told bold truths, which a certain decency would prevent uttering upon other occasions? Here you have been told before, and I tell you again, that your lives are in constant opposition to the maxims of Christ; and that whilst you continue to live as you do, you can have no claim to the kingdom of God. Is it not from this chair of truth you are informed that the overcharges you make in your dealings, your conniving at the frauds and injustices of others, adulterating your goods, or perhaps using false weights and measures, are so many criminal actions, which if you refuse to make a just reparation for, you can never enter the kingdom of heaven? Is it not from the pulpit you are told, in the words of St. Paul, that "all adulterers, all drunkards and blasphemers, all covetous and rapacious men: that is to say, the unjust invaders of their neighbour's property, will never enter the kingdom of God?" Is it not by preaching you are instructed, that in order to be saved it is not enough to refrain from certain gross vices, such as murder, adultery, and theft; (from which in general, the very pagans themselves refrain;) but you must likewise practise the virtues prescribed by the gospel—humility, charity, meekness, self-denial, the love of God above all things, and of your neighbour as yourself? Is it not by the word of God that the sinner's heart is roused, alarmed, stormed amidst its criminal enjoyment, and at length rescued from all its disorders? Here all the prevailing, endearing motives of religion are blended and united together to face sin, and to engage the sinner to forsake his evil ways, and return unto the Lord. One time we lay before the woe-worn, oppressed mortal, before feeble infirmity and pining misery, a lively picture of the unspeakable joys of heaven, the torrents of delights that wait for them above, where the just and the good, where patient suffering and true piety, are to be crowned and immersed for ever in the liveliest ecstasy; and we beseech them to consider if such great and incomprehensible felicity is not worth all their cares, their woes, their sufferings, their patience, and their piety. Another time, we transport the

sinner in idea into the flaming gulf of hell, and give him thereby room to reflect and to see how great the folly and madness is, to purchase eternal misery and sufferings amidst ever-living, all-devouring, and yet never-consuming flames, for the short-lived pleasure of one moment's sinful enjoyment. Now we remind you of all that God hath suffered for your salvation; of the death and passion of Jesus Christ, your Saviour; we reproach you withal for being so blind, or so perverse, as to defeat his merciful views by rushing headlong into perdition, notwithstanding the blood of a God was shed for you on the cross, whereof the least drop, in the opinion of divines, was enough to save a thousand sinful and corrupted worlds!

Now, my brethren, I leave yourselves to judge, if a sinner must not be deaf to all the suggestions of grace, and blind to the light and principles of faith, to resist such pressing motives of conversion? "The word of God," says St. Paul to the Hebrews, "is quick and effectual, more penetrating than any two-edged sword, and piercing even unto the dividing of the soul and spirit." Besides those inherent qualities, a special and particular grace always attends the hearing of the word of God. As it is most certain that all the preaching in the world cannot convert a soul without the assistance of heaven; so it is an undoubted principle, that there are very special assistances annexed to preaching; for Jesus Christ says to his disciples, "It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." It follows, therefore, that the arts of persuasion, or the flowers of eloquence, or the figures of speech, or "the studied expressions of human wisdom," as St. Paul calls them, are not the means by which the ministers of Christ can expect to do good: No; but by virtue of the cross, or that grace which was merited by Jesus Christ upon the cross. We may indeed move and strike the air, but it is the Spirit of God alone that produces the victorious sound and strikes the heart.

This divine assistance, so indispensably necessary for doing good, is always bestowed or offered by that God who instituted preaching as a means to establish and promote his spiritual kingdom upon earth. Whilst the ministers of the Gospel announce the truths of salvation unto the ear, the Spirit of God descends into the heart, to make it docile to the outward sound and vibrate to his holy grace. Hence arise these pious emotions, which you always feel more powerful during the ministry of the word than upon other occasions; a sincere sorrow for sin; a strong resolution of renouncing it for

ever ; a more perfect love of God, and the warmest desires of eternal happiness.

Seeing, therefore, that the word of God is of the greatest virtue and efficacy, how comes it to pass that it does not produce this hundred-fold mentioned in the Gospel? For the very same reason that in physic the best remedies are often unproductive of any effects, either because of the indisposition of the patient, or the abuse of the remedy. The word of God is very capable of producing the choicest fruits of justice : nevertheless it is very often frustrated in its effects by the abuse we make of it, as I shall briefly lay before you in the second part of this discourse.

Second—A part of the seed which the farmer, or husbandman, went out to sow, fell by the wayside, and a part of it on a bad and unfruitful soil. Thus, there are many Christians who never put themselves in the way of hearing the word ; or hear it with such dispositions of the mind as must deprive it of its effects. Now the way to make the word of God profitable to our souls, is, first, to hear it ; and, secondly, to hear it with a spirit of religion.

“Happy are those,” says our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, “that hear the word of God ;” but how few are they to whom this happiness extends ! Is not every little trifle enough to hinder the Christians of our days, especially the genteeler part, from assisting at the word of God ? The hindrance one time is a party of pleasure they cannot break ; another time an entertainment for friends they cannot disappoint ; at other times a certain indolence, or rather criminal laziness, to quit a warm, comfortable apartment, and appear in the open air ; or, at another time, a strong apprehension of incommoding their very nice persons in a crowd, and seeing the economy of a genteel dress ruffled and disordered by the indiscretion or rudeness of the vulgar. Very often it is a positive contempt for the ministers of Christ ; for what can be more common than to hear people expressing themselves in this manner : “Who is to preach to-day ?”—Such a one.—“Poh ! flat, flat ; dry like a chip. For my part, I’ll not go hear him. I don’t like his manner. There is neither elegance in his style, nor connection in his thoughts, nor solidity in his proofs, nor grace in his delivery. All he says is no more than a heap of pious thoughts thrown confusedly together.

But supposing the reverend pastor, the representative of God, whom you are thus pleased to represent, still less adorned with the profane trappings of human erudition, yet it is the word of God he announces, and the word of God is attended

with particular blessings, as you have heard Christ say : "Happy are those that hear the word of God." By an inversion of reasoning we may also say, unhappy are they who do not hear the word of God : but I say, unhappy is the man whose proud heart and sensorious tongue withdraws him from hearing the word of God ; because the word of God, being in itself magnificent and sublime, stands not in need of human embellishments, although these may be applied. Censuring, therefore, a preacher is very unbecoming a Christian, who should listen with meekness to the minister of Christ, and here his words as the words of Christ. For what need is there, or why should fine language or the niceties of composition be used, in telling you that you are daily running on in the broad and spacious road which directly leads to eternal perdition ? What need is there of fine language or the niceties of composition, to tell you that a great many pagans would blush to be guilty of the shameful excesses of intemperance, and lust, and fraud, that a great many of you daily fall into ? What need of fine language or nice composition, to tell you that the heathens themselves treat their false gods, their deaf, dumb, and blind gods, their gods made by hands out of sticks and stones, with vastly more respect than many Christians do the name, sufferings, and death of Jesus Christ ? They respect their gods, and honour them—we, the adorers of the one only and true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, who neither had a beginning nor will have an end, and is infinite in all his attributes—we dishonour this God by our crimes ; we even attack him upon his throne by our imprecations or cursing ; we defy his vengeance, and challenge his power ! To tell you this is the high road to hell requires neither fine language nor nice composition : nor, in fine, to tell you that those nations among whom the light of faith shines not, are more honest in their dealings, less envious of their neighbour's prosperity, more humane and compassionate to their fellow-creatures' distress, than a great many of those who are reared in the Church of Christ from their infancy.

The prophets of old when commissioned by God, and sent to the Jews, how did they act ? Plain men, sometimes chosen from among shepherds, unknowing in worldly, but rich in heavenly wisdom—they told the Jews they were sent by Almighty God to inform them of the ways of salvation. They reproached them with the various disorders of their lives, and threatened them with the judgments of God. They entreated and besought them to renounce their sinful ways and return unto the Lord ; giving at the same time the

strongest assurances of forgiveness. Is not this what the ministers of Christ daily do in the present dispensation? And although the form of their discourses should not be acceptable to the delicacy of this corrupted age, they certainly perform their own part, even perhaps with more fruit than by pursuing any over-nice methods, for this very plain but convincing reason, that truth never shines brighter than in the plainest dress.

Do you, then, my brethren, I beseech you—as the prophets did the Jews of old—I beseech you, be mindful to act your own part, by attending assiduously on the word of God: otherwise you certainly will be brought to a very severe account for your neglect at the tribunal of Christ. Every sermon is a grace on which, perhaps, your conversion depends. Yet how many refuse those graces from the hand of God! What is the consequence? That these sermons will be the very cause of their reprobation: for Jesus Christ says in the Gospel of St. John, “He that receiveth not my word, hath one to judge him. The words which I have spoken shall judge him at the last day.” Again, “He that is of God, heareth the words of God, therefore you hear not, because you are not of God.” How much then have those to answer for who never hear the word of God! Let them remember the dreadful words of the Holy Ghost, by the prophet Isaias, “My word shall not return empty unto me;” that is to say, it will serve to show the unbounded mercies of God, by bringing forth fruits of conversion in this life, or to display his inflexible justice by eternal punishments in the next.

But it is not enough to hear the word of God assiduously; you must likewise hear it with proper dispositions of mind: for the word of God, as our Saviour says, is a seed which cannot fructify if it be not received in a fit and suitable soil. If, therefore, you wish to reap any benefit from this heavenly seed, you must prepare your hearts for receiving it by imploring the assistance of heaven, through the merits of Jesus Christ, and beseeching the Almighty to make it profitable to your souls; by giving the word of God a due attention of the mind, and not suffering yourselves to be distracted or carried away by vain curiosity, or loose imaginations; by putting on a firm resolution to carry the instructions you hear into execution; so as to make them the rule of your whole conduct. Instead of behaving in this manner, people generally come to a sermon, either to criticise the preacher, or to be seen in public, or to see. An hour now grows heavy on their hands, and to pass it away, to get rid of it, is desirable—“Come,” say they,

"come, let us go to the sermon; let us see how the preacher will act. It is not easy to speak long to one point without deviation." With such dispositions, it is no way surprising the word of God should produce little fruit. They come to the temple of God, as to a temple of Satan, I mean a play-house, and with the same dispositions—they seek not instruction but amusement. Is it surprising, then, that the word of God should produce little effect? Is not preaching, or announcing the word to Christians of this disposition, sowing the most fruitful seed in the most barren soil, where it must necessarily decay, rot, and die?

Others there are who hear the word of God assiduously, with attention and piety; but afterwards neglect it so far as never to carry it into execution. The moment they quit the house of God all is over. The instructions they received are banished from their minds, or overwhelmed and drowned amidst the various cares and solitudes of life. The seed with those falls among thorns, "and the thorns growing up together, choke and destroy it." "The preacher," they say, has acted his own part, it is his business to arraign publicly, and lash severely, the vices of the age; to be talking always of heaven and hell; but still he knows not the world. Every man must mind his business and affairs." Why not; but mind them in such a manner as not to hurt or prejudice your souls. Your salvation is your first—your chief business. It is the preacher's business to decry vice, and promote the empire of virtue and godliness; but it is your business not only to hear his instructions, but to put them in practice upon every occasion. For, "it is not they that hear the law," says St. Paul, "that shall be justified; but those that shall fulfil it."

Wherefore, as often as you hear the preacher declare, that whoever lives in a state of sin, either by running into intemperance or lust, cursing, swearing, blaspheming the name of the Lord, cheating or oppressing his neighbour, or overlooking the wants of the poor, are all excluded from the kingdom of God, and liable to eternal fire, look into yourselves and see if you are not guilty of any one of these crimes; and if so, reform immediately and be converted to the Lord your God. This is receiving the word of God in a fruitful soil, which produceth a hundred fold, and laying a most solid foundation for eternal happiness. For, as Christ, our Saviour, saith in the Gospel: "He that heareth my word, and fulfilleth it, shall be likened unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock: although the winds blew, and the storms raged, and torrents dashed with violence against it, yet as the house was built

upon a firm foundation, it remained unmoved amidst the dreadful shock." Even so, if you, my brethren, not only hear, but fulfil the word of God, you shall be settled upon the rock, so as to be able to withstand all the assaults of your enemies—the corruption of the world, the frailty of the flesh, and all the malice and fury of hell. Then shall you say with the royal prophet, "Thy word, O Lord, like a bright flame, guides and directs my steps through the dark and intricate windings of this life: it enlightens the understanding, and gives the true and real wisdom to those of the meanest capacity. Like a fiery dart, it inflames the soul, and excites it powerfully to the practice of righteousness."

Hitherto, we confess it with sorrow, we have been extremely neglectful of the word of God; but knowing it now to be one of the most valuable blessings that heaven can bestow, and a most powerful means of salvation, we shall be more constant and assiduous in hearing, and more diligent in forming our lives thereupon; to the end, that after bearing the "hundred fold" fruits of justice upon earth, we may at the end of life be admitted to contemplate the Divine Word face to face—Jesus Christ, the lively image and bright effulgence of the Divinity in his heavenly kingdom—for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON X.

ON THE SERVICE OF GOD.

"Render therefore to God the things that are of God."

MATT., c. xxii., v. 21.

ALL the duty of man is reducible to three heads—what we owe to God, our neighbour, and ourselves. But the first is the greatest of all, not only as it has an immediate relation to the Divinity, but likewise as it comprehends the rest: for if we acquit ourselves properly of what is justly due to the Almighty God, we certainly must fulfil every obligation, so as to leave no material duty undischarged. Should you ask me, with the royal prophet, "Is he not our God, and if he be, can he stand in need of anything we possess?" and should you follow up that question by another—What, then, is it that appears due from mortals unto the Almighty? St. Paul answers, that, in general, what is due from mortals unto the Almighty, are HONOUR, GLORY, AND PRAISE.

By ten thousand titles do we owe this homage to our God, as our Creator and Redeemer, as our Hope and Reward, as our Protector, Conservator, and the kind Giver of all

good gifts; but to be more particular on this subject, we shall see in the tenth chapter of Deuteronomy what the Spirit of God declares the Almighty requires at our hands: "That we fear the Lord our God, and walk in his ways, and that we serve the Lord with all our hearts and with all our souls." Here we are commanded in the first place to fear him; (this one sentence, I must observe is a summary of the whole Christian religion), this salutary fear of his power and of his justice will necessarily prompt us to forsake sin, and of course, "walk in his ways," the ways of grace and virtue. Having forsaken sin and entered the ways of grace and virtue, it is moreover necessary "that we serve the Lord our God with all our hearts;" that all the powers, faculties, and sense of our bodies, be directed to the honour, glory, and praise of our great and good God, and that they be accompanied by all the affections, propensities, and desires of our souls. This is the duty clearly marked out for us by the Holy Ghost in the foregoing sentence from the book of Deuteronomy; and it is precisely this duty which, in after ages, God himself speaking to sinners upon earth, to the Scribes and Pharisees, laid down for his faithful servants: "Render therefore to God the things that are of God"

The great end and universal destination of man is to fulfil this duty. For this purpose, and for this alone, has man been created, and introduced into this world. But amidst the general war maintained between principle and action, duty and conduct, very few there are who square their lives by this great and universal rule. We all admit in speculation—but speculation is a dry and barren soil, where brambles and briars, not virtues, vegetate—in speculation we admit that Almighty God is indisputably the great Master of all; if so, I require to know with the royal prophet, "where is the honour that is due to him; where the deference that should be paid unto his supreme laws?" If the Almighty be the great Master of all, why do we not prove ourselves his true and obsequious servants, by fulfilling the duties of his service? The service of God is, unhappily, a term without a meaning; for we all possess it, and few or none fulfil it. The service of God is still that term which of all others carries the most solid, the most profound, the most important meaning; a term that involves all the interests that are or should be dear to mankind; a term which the Church of God calls on me this day to explain to you, according to the exposition of the Holy Ghost, in the double capacity in which you are required to serve the Almighty God; namely, "with all your hearts, and with all

your souls." In obedience, therefore, to her commands, you will attend me carefully in the consideration, first, of the motives which should induce us to serve Almighty God; and secondly, the manner in which he requires to be served by us.

First.—Among the many motives for serving the Lord which press upon the mind, the most prominent is his supreme power and dominion. Sovereign Master of all things by creation, conservation, and ultimate destination, the Lord has an undoubted right to command; and what he commands every creature is visibly obliged to fulfil. Now the Almighty God commands us to serve him, as appears from many places in holy writ, in particular from the tenth chapter of Deuteronomy, where he says, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him alone." Nothing can be more reasonable than to serve the Almighty; for if subjection be due to power in general, as it really is, how much more is it due to the supreme, independent, uncontrollable power of a God? As supreme Master of all things, the Almighty could forcibly have tied us down to a constant compliance with his holy will, as may be easily inferred from the brute and insensible part of the creation. For is there any one thing which falls within our knowledge or observation that does not continually fulfil the purposes for which it was created? That glorious orb of light, the sun, ceases not, and will not cease till time shall be no more, to enlighten the planets that roll around him, according to the different phase they present to his rays, thus producing with us the alternate changes of days, and nights, and seasons, summer heats and winter colds; and thus for near six thousand years has that creature been fulfilling, exactly and without deviation, the great end for which he was made. In like manner the moon and stars perform for us the same kind offices by night which the sun does by day, and thus fulfil one great end of their creation.

View well the earth whereon you stand—in winter its vegetating powers are suspended; in spring they open and push forth various fruits for the support of man and all the animals of the land: in summer those fruits are matured, and stored in autumn. Thus, ever faithful to the great hand that made it, and ever regular in fulfilling the end for which it was made, this deaf, and dumb, and blind creature, earth, will always be a standing monument of reproach to man, endowed with reason and noble faculties, because these faculties and that reason, instead of being devoted and employed in the great end for which they were bestowed—the service of God, are daily and almost constantly busied in offering him some

indignity or insult. Had Almighty God been pleased to exert his supreme power and dominion over us, it is unquestionable he could have subjected us, like the brute ox of the field, to an uniform obedience to his holy laws. But he has not thought proper to do so. He has been pleased in creating to endow us with free will; and to direct that free will to avoid evil and pursue good; he has also been pleased to confer reason or understanding upon man, in order that he might be served and obeyed by man as a free agent, possessed of liberty to offer or withhold the homage we owe him by all the claims of creation and redemption. Now, nothing can reflect more honour upon the Divinity than that tribute of adoration and homage, which, being in our power to withhold, we always pay from our own free will and election. Subjection of any kind would show the power and dominion of God over all his creatures; but free and unconstrained adoration proclaims aloud not only his greatness but his goodness. By the one the Almighty would certainly appear the first Principle and great Master of all things; but by the other he not only appears, but is willingly acknowledged in that character. However, this privilege of liberty, or free agency, that man alone is endowed with among all the creatures that we know of under the sun, does not by any means take away or lessen the obligation he lies under of serving the Almighty as supreme Lord of all things. No: the Almighty still tells him aloud: "Thou shalt adore the Lord thy God, and him alone shalt thou serve." It is true he does not enforce this command with violence, compulsion, or irresistible force; but he does it in a manner suitable to our free will and the constitution of all free agents—by proposing eternal rewards and eternal punishments; eternal rewards for those who comply, and eternal punishments for those who refuse obedience to that command of adoring and serving the Lord our God.

The Lord our God is not only the great Master of all, but the greatest of all masters. St. John proclaims him in Revelations, "The King of kings and Lord of lords," and the Holy Ghost declares: "It is by him that kings and princes reign." So that he in reality is the fruitful source from whence all power and authority derive. All that is grand or beautiful in nature, wonderful or stupendous in magnitude, correct or perfect by harmony or order; all that pleases, that delights, that fills the eye or captivates the heart, all, I say, are but as sparks emanating from the Divinity. From him alone they flow, as being the fountain and source of all that is great or grand, sublime or beautiful. And in this character has not

the Lord an undoubted right to our services? There is a certain noble spirit of rectitude in man which readily submits to true and unfeigned greatness. But where is this true and unfeigned greatness to be found? Nowhere but in the Divinity. All the rest is but a vain show of some faint and borrowed shades of greatness. All the rest is downright emptiness, a mere nothing. Why then, my brethren, is it not to the great and omnipotent God that we devote our hearts and services? Is he defective in any title to make him deserving both of the one and the other? As our Creator, he called us into existence and gave us a being, not of beasts, but of the human kind: as our Father, he upholds and provides for that being, by settling and fixing us in the world, and supplying all our necessary wants; and, as our God, he holds within our view, and exhibits within our reach, immortal life, immortal joys, immortal glory for ever and ever in the kingdom of heaven. If these are not claims on you to serve the Lord, and obey his holy laws, say, I beseech you, what are? He does more—when you forsook the Lord by sin, he called on you, by his ministers, and tenderly invited you to return to him by repentance, promising “were your sins as red as scarlet he would make them as white as wool:” and in doing so, he has done a greater act than the creation of the world. Say, then, where is he defective in every claim to your homage and to your service? Say, then, who is it or what is it has so good a right to the service of your heart? Rather, let me ask, is there anything to be found besides God alone, worthy the heart and the affections of man? To engage in the service of renowned and distinguished princes is a favourite pursuit of people in this world; to serve under great and distinguished warriors, mighty men of fame, is the highest ambition of noble and generous souls—but what is all the greatness of the world compared to the greatness of God? “Are not all the nations upon earth as if they were not in his sight?” says the royal prophet. Why, then, do we not declare for the service of God, if greatness be a motive, as it really is? But Almighty God has other claims on our service—he is not only the greatest master we can serve, but undoubtedly the best of all masters.

If mankind were always attentive and obedient to the dictates of reason, there would be no necessity to lay before them any incitement to the service of God. The dictates of reason must clearly show that every creature should live in a continual subjection to the all-powerful hand which gave it being, and preserves its existence. But as we are all born with various irregular passions, which always counteract and very

frequently darken the light of reason, so as to lead us astray from the paths of truth and righteousness, it became necessary to propose unto man such inducements to virtue as must counterbalance his natural depravity and weakness.

Now, Almighty God has effectually set up this counterbalance, by proposing rewards to all those that would faithfully serve him; and those rewards are of such a nature as must command the attention of the most inconsiderate minds, and fix the affections of the most worldly hearts. Of these rewards some are confined to this life, others to the life to come. Respecting this life what the Almighty promises his true and faithful servants, is, not exemption from pain and suffering, from sickness, woes, or wants, nor from oppression or injustice, nor violent and repeated attacks from the great enemy of mankind, but inward peace and tranquillity of mind, as appears from what Jesus Christ lays down in the Gospel: "Take my yoke upon you, and you shall find rest unto your souls." This peace of mind is undoubtedly the greatest blessing we can enjoy in this life, as it maintains the soul in a constant composure under the heaviest afflictions, and banishes those fears and anxieties which frequently startle and terrify the hardest sinners, even amidst their pleasures, by laying before them the dreadful picture of their sins, and the more dreadful punishments that must ensue. This was the great gift that Jesus Christ conferred on his apostles after his resurrection, whereby they were enabled to bear with tranquillity, and even sustain with pleasure, all the persecutions and sufferings that hell could vomit forth. "Peace be with you," sweet, delectable, happy peace! a blessing the more valuable as it is not to be purchased by anything this world can bestow; a blessing frequently unknown to the monarch upon the throne, to the conqueror amidst his trophies, to the rich man amidst his opulence, to the man of pleasure amidst the most refined and delicious enjoyments—a blessing, in fine, so grand, so inestimable, that to obtain it no one but would exchange for it the most valuable possessions of life.

This blessing, so valuable in itself, this peace which fills the heart of man upon earth, and makes him anticipate the consolations of the blessed in heaven, the unerring word of God promises to all those who love and serve the Lord with fidelity. "The kingdom of God," says St. Paul, "is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Sinners drunk with guilty joys may pretend to inward peace and tranquillity of mind, but believe them not. Sooner will the lamb and the lion, the wolf and the

sheep associate, than the peace I speak of and guilt reside together. The Spirit of truth declares, that tranquillity of mind is a weak and groundless pretension with sinners; although they may frequently discourse of peace and spiritual quiet, "yet it is far from them, as it resides in the hearts of the just and righteous alone." Of this inward peace and tranquillity, this spiritual comfort and consolation, was the royal prophet truly sensible when he cried out, that "one day spent in the service of the Lord was preferable to a thousand years." In other words, that all the pleasures this world could afford for a thousand years, were not comparable to the pure and holy joys which the peace of Jesus Christ conveys in one day to the souls of the just. Already have I hinted to you whence this inward peace and tranquillity proceed. They proceed from the influence of divine grace; from the unction of the Holy Ghost; from an inward consciousness of being in favour with God, and consequently entitled to the joys and glory of the kingdom of heaven. This sweet joy and pure delight which, the royal prophet says, Almighty God imparts to those who truly serve him, is further supported by St. Paul: "The Spirit (of God) giveth testimony unto our spirit (or soul) that we are the children of God." However, you are to observe, this consciousness of being in favour with God can never amount to an absolute certainty. No: this were the height of presumption, because "no man knows whether he be worthy of love or hatred" in the eyes of God, according to the expression of St. Paul. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied but that this inward testimony of the Spirit is so strong as to banish all these dreadful apprehensions which torment sinners continually, and hinder them from stating the inexpressible pleasure of being united unto God. Nothing can be more pleasing to the mind, or contribute more to the real happiness of man, than a situation in which he is conscious of being in favour with Almighty God. This happiness is the certain consequence of serving God, the great and inestimable reward he confers even in this life on all those who love and serve him. The other rewards concern the life to come, and consist in the joys and glory of the kingdom of heaven.

Here let me invite you to raise your thoughts to sublimer views than what this world affords, in order to conceive the unbounded goodness of Almighty God. What is it he promises all those who serve him and obey his laws? "O heavens, be ye amazed and astonished at the sound!" What doth he promise? To seat them upon thrones, and make them reign eternally with himself in his heavenly kingdom. Weigh

well within yourselves the extent of this bounty and clemency. Almighty God, as supreme Master of all things, had an undoubted right to our services without promising the least reward. For he that plants the vineyard, that tills or cultivates the field, has an unquestionable right to the fruit thereof; yet the Lord God was too generous and good to require our services on the score of right, and was graciously pleased to promise eternal happiness as a reward for all who truly serve him. This eternal happiness has been promised through Christ our Lord. In him and through him our services are crowned with eternal rewards; not only our services in general, but every action in particular, and even our very desires and affections. It is impossible to conceive anything equal to this bounty of Almighty God; but incomprehensible it is indeed, that this great bounty and wonderful goodness of the Lord makes little or no impression on the heart of man! Almighty God has the strongest titles imaginable to our services—his power, dominion, inconceivable bounty and goodness; and still we refuse to serve him upon any title whatsoever.

After Joshua had introduced the Israelites into the Holy Land, he assembled them together, and recounted before them in a few words the many extraordinary blessings they had received from the Almighty hand of God. He reminded them of the many signal miracles that had been wrought in their favour on their departure from Egypt, their crossing the Red Sea, and during the time of their wandering in the desert; then he concludes with these remarkable words—"O Israelites! do you now yourselves choose the master you are henceforward to serve and obey;" either the great God that has been so bountiful to you, or the gods of nations from whom you have received nothing, and have nothing to receive. May I not now, with a great deal of justice, make you the same proposal, and say, look all around you and see what master you have the best right to serve and obey? If you can find any being equal to the Almighty God, in power, greatness, or goodness, dispose of your services as you think proper—but if you cannot, why do you refuse paying to the Lord your God the great debt you owe him, of faithfully serving him for evermore? Is he not worthy your services? Has he not every claim on your services that can constitute a title? As Sovereign, Benefactor, Master, Lord, and Father, we owe him not only our services but our very lives. Elsewhere what can be found but ingratitude, infidelity, continual disappointment, and in the end misery. I appeal to your own experience, my brethren,

for the justice of this remark. For many years have you been serving the world—slaves to the world; for what purpose? Where are now the fruits of all your labours? Some perhaps may boast of having acquired large fortunes; but how have you acquired them? Perhaps by wading through toils, and difficulties, and dangers, or overleaping the bounds of justice, and setting conscience adrift. A while hence shall Jesus Christ ask you those questions, and you must answer him. And a while hence, say, if you can, what will become of these fortunes? say what will become of yourselves? Your fortunes shall pass into other hands, your bodies into dust and ashes from whence they came, and your immortal souls where the rigorous justice of God shall appoint. This true and awful prospect is what this world alone affords for all our services. Let us then give them another bent, where disappointments, anguish, or deception are unknown: let us turn at length and serve Almighty God, who can, who will, who has promised to make us eternally happy, if we but faithfully serve him here on earth. To discharge your duty on this subject effectually, so as to make you entitled to the promises of Almighty God, it is necessary you should know the nature of the services he requires at your hands, which will engage our consideration in the second part of this discourse.

Second—When Joshua, the great leader of Israel, and legislator after Moses, was about to depart from this world, he convoked his people, and among the instructions he gave, as laid down in the twenty-fourth chapter of his book, he especially enjoins them by a particular inspiration of the Holy Ghost: "Do you fear the Lord, and serve him with a perfect and a most sincere heart." Now serving the Lord with a perfect and most sincere heart, implies two things—that we serve him with fidelity and constancy. Serving God with fidelity is serving God alone; and that him alone we are obliged to serve appears from the Gospel, where Jesus Christ says, "Thou shalt adore the Lord thy God, and him alone shalt thou serve." In the Gospel likewise our blessed Saviour further declares, that "no man can serve two masters," because he must necessarily hate and despise one or the other of the two: as the obedience the one requires is utterly inconsistent with the submission due to the other. Almighty God, therefore, having an undoubted and unalienable right to our services, cannot endure the least division to be made of our hearts. As we owe all we are and all we possess, as well as all we expect or hope for to the unbounded goodness of God, he requires we should devote ourselves entirely to his service.

To do otherwise is robbing him of that part of his glory he is most jealous of—the sacrifice of our hearts; as the Holy Ghost says, “It is committing a spiritual and sacrilegious rapine, than which nothing can be more abominable in the eyes of the Lord.” Nevertheless, my brethren, is not this infidelity in the service of the Lord, the very crime you are most commonly guilty of? Does it not appear by your conduct that you would willingly serve God and the world at one and the same time? I appeal to facts. Almighty God calls on you to restrain your eyes, those inlets of vice to the soul, and your other senses, by the laws of self-denial—and yet play-houses, public shows, and places of public amusement, as they are erroneously called, are constantly filled with Christians, who thus pamper and nourish those corrupt senses which we are bound to keep under, and which, instead of being mastered, master us, and gradually usurp the total empire of the heart, which we are bound to give to God alone. You do not intend or wish to forsake the Lord by complying with some of the customs of the world—where those customs are innocent, (yet which of them are innocent?) you may be excusable: but by exposing yourself to temptation, you divide your heart between God and the world; and by adopting the false maxims, the false notions, the sinful ways and corrupt practices of the world, you necessarily forsake the Lord your God, because “no man can serve two masters.”

To descend more to particulars, let us consider how people acquit themselves of the fidelity they owe to the service of God. The citizen, complying with the false maxims of the world, readily swallows the oaths of office, which, conveying but a momentary vibration to the mind, are readily forgotten and as readily infringed and violated. But you will say they are only oaths of office, mere matters of course, no body keeps them. Will that excuse you before Jesus Christ? The merchant in invoicing or outvoicing or valuing his goods, swears not always to strict truth; or what is equally criminal, complying with the usual mode of doing business, he countenances by his silence the false reports made by his captains or masters of vessels at the custom-house, respecting the quantum of goods his vessel contains, to which the captain or master must swear, when perhaps the merchant or owner shall at the very same time have concealed goods on board, for the purpose of smuggling, or blinding by bribes, the officers from doing their duty. The laws of God, in those cases, and his holy service are put aside. But to proceed—men in business or in a trading line, who pretend to be Christians, and to serve

Almighty God in that character, very seldom fail to follow the wicked ways of life, in grasping at every advantage that interest presents to view, as often as occasion offers ; and to justify by their cleverness what the Lord God shall judge and condemn them for on the great day of reckoning. So many and various are the instances wherein the service of God is set aside in this case, that every trader must see on reflection, where and how far this remark attaches particularly to himself. It is a general custom, and you all know it, that whenever and wherever a number of decent people meet and assemble to enjoy themselves, nothing is more usual, nothing even more fashionable, than to introduce such subjects as must necessarily offend and shock every modest ear. In such cases as these, how is a Christian to conduct himself? Let him recollect the service he owes to God, and obedience to his holy laws : let him declare publicly for God and his holy laws : let him rise up boldly and arraign the corruption of the age ; but discretion in such conduct must be a leading feature—nothing short of necessity can justify any conduct whereby charity may be violated, friendly intercourse dissolved, or bitterness created. But where prudence will not allow a broad and open reprobation of improper conduct, silence, attended by a certain severity of countenance, especially in the company of men of superior rank, will overawe such unchristian proceedings.

Persons who lay great claim to Christianity, and pretend to serve the Lord, instead of pursuing the line I have marked out, generally chime in with their company, countenance disorder, blast virtue by immorality, and gently glide along the stream which is rolling them all headlong to the flaming gulf below. It may be asked, is a man, under such circumstances as I have mentioned, to offend his company, friends, or distinguished characters in his own house? Surely, if necessary, rather than offend Almighty God. What claim has that company on you, that you should insult the majesty of God, by conforming to their wicked ways?—that you should damn your own soul, from a false principle of fashionable agreement to sin? Was it that company, those friends, these distinguished characters that called you forth from nothing, and gave you existence, a tongue to praise, and power to please, not affront, the great Author of your being? Was it that company that redeemed you from the tyranny of Satan, the slavery of original sin, and the eternal punishments due to your personal sins? Is it, in a word, that company that can make you eternally happy, or eternally miserable in the life to come? No, no. If not, why do you relinquish upon such occasions the fidelity you owe to the

service of God at all times and upon all occasions? Why hear the voice of man before the voice of God? Why, O why will you gratify the passions of men to the destruction of your own immortal souls? Yet you do so; you frequently do so: but mark the consequence—to be cast out an unworthy servant into exterior darkness, “where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; where the sun never rises, nor any glimpse is ever seen of the glory of heaven.” St. Paul was well convinced of the dangers attending an acquaintance to the ways of life when he said, “Were I to please men I should no longer be a servant of Christ,”—whence, it is plain, if you intend to serve the Almighty God, you must relinquish the wrong opinions of men, forsake their sinful practices, and follow a course different from that which they generally follow. The fidelity we owe Almighty God requires that we never transgress any essential point of his law for any consideration whatsoever; but the prevailing conduct among Christians in our days shows that this is a theoretical not a practical principle—and I form that conclusion from the few there are who pay any attention thereunto. Occasion offers, opportunity presents itself of making a good hit in the world, but the laws of God forbid the execution—how does man behave, I speak of men in general, even those who pretend to serve the Lord? Why, cunning reason starts up the idea, that, perhaps, the same opportunity again may not occur of raising one’s family, removing distress, banishing want: this reasoning becomes conclusive—conscience must go asleep—the morality of the Gospel must be overleaped, and the occasion embraced; although to compass the end it may be necessary to pursue every iniquitous step that passion and the inordinate love of the world can suggest. But is this serving the Almighty God, and serving him with the fidelity he requires? Is it not rather serving Mammon; that is, the god of interest, the god of riches, the god of this world? And yet Jesus Christ assures us, that no man can serve God and mammon;” so that if you adhere to the one you must necessarily renounce the other. But these are maxims of the world. They may be so—but I say, and I speak on the part of God, that no laws, no maxims of the world, should ever induce a Christian to deviate from the laws and maxims of Christ, because it is not by the laws and maxims of the world we are to be judged, but by the laws and maxims of Jesus Christ, as laid down in the Gospel. If, therefore, we do forget these laws or maxims of Christ, either in our conversation or conduct, in our dress or public appearance, we certainly prove ourselves

unfaithful servants, and, consequently, can have no share in Christ or his promises. For to entitle us to the promises of Christ, we must serve him with fidelity and also with constancy.

The Holy Ghost, speaking by the mouth of the wise man (Eccl. 5), directs, "Do you stand firm in the ways of the Lord;" because, says Jesus Christ in the Gospel, "He that persevereth to the end shall be saved." If, therefore, you sincerely intend to secure your eternal happiness, (and what object should be so dear to you?) you must take care to walk constantly in the ways of heaven. For the Almighty God is too good and merciful to abandon at the last hour, on which our salvation depends, those who had served him faithfully during the foregoing part of their lives. These are not my promises, but those of the Spirit of God, who speaks in the Revelations: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." This steadiness, this constancy in the ways of God, is the true character of all those that are destined for eternal happiness. But where is this steadiness to be found? What more do the very best of you than serve Almighty God as it were by starts and fits? On the return of a great festival you all take some pains (I suppose this, because you all should take pains), to be reconciled with the Almighty God: and you continue the exercises of piety and religion for three or four weeks, perhaps not so many days, at the end of which time you never fail to fall back to your usual courses of life. But why this inconstancy, these continual changes, vicissitudes, and variations? Is Almighty God more deserving of your services at one time than at another? Do not the same motives always subsist, which influenced you to serve God at one particular season of the year? Is he not at all times our God and our Redeemer, our Master and Protector, the Author of our being and the only Source of our happiness? If, therefore, we think it an indispensable obligation at one time to love him, to worship, to serve him "in spirit and truth," according to St. Paul, why are we not always governed by the same principles? Remember what our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ says in the Gospel; "He that once put his hand to the plough and afterwards looks back, is not fit for the kingdom of heaven." This looking back, after putting our hand to the plough, or returning to sin after entering the way of virtue, is unhappily the case with each of ourselves in particular. Often have we returned to the Lord, often promised to continue for ever in his service: but these promises we have as often violated.

We abandoned his service to serve our vanity, our interest, our passions. Did we but consider the indignity of such conduct, as well as the woful consequences that follow, we should certainly never be guilty of it. The indignity constitutes a crime of high insult to the majesty of the Lord ; and the consequence of such crime is impenitence, reprobation, and final perdition. This is the true meaning of what the Apostle St. Jude says, cautioning the faithful by a similitude : “ Take care you become not like these wandering stars which are never fixed or regular in their motions, but evermore roving up and down the heavens ; for they are reserved for the most horrid darkness during the whole length of eternity.”

Treating on this subject, the most intelligent masters of a spiritual life assure us, that, in some measure, there are greater hopes of the salvation of the greatest sinners, than of these wavering and unsettled Christians : for the sinner may one time or other return unto the Lord, and continue afterwards in favour with him to the end of life ; whereas these inconstant men, who are one day with God and another day against him, will certainly be taken out of this world in one of these changes, whilst they are in disgrace with God, and consequently liable to all the dire effects of his wrath and indignation. A misfortune of this kind, dreadful as it is, we have each of us deserved in particular to undergo for our inconstancy in the ways of the Lord. But he hath been pleased by an excess of goodness to spare us, and to offer us this day the means of repentance. This consideration alone should overwhelm us with love and gratitude, and bind us down evermore to his service. Jesus Christ asks : “ What will it avail us to gain the whole world, if we lose our souls ? ” I leave you to answer that question—but I say the only means of saving our immortal souls, our precious souls, purchased by the sufferings of a God, are to serve the Lord : to serve him with fidelity and constancy. Let us, therefore, this day arm ourselves with a strong and inviolable resolution never to depart from the services of the Lord for any consideration or upon any motives whatsoever. Reject every temptation held out by the world. The world shall pass away and all things therein ; and let them pass and perish sooner than we forsake the service of God ; sooner than we plunge ourselves into the caverns of eternal night and sorrow. With regard to ourselves, what will the whole world be in a few years, or in a few months, perhaps in a few days ? Of its empty shows, its vain comforts, not so much then as a shadow will remain. And if so, shall we risk immortality, joy, happiness, and our

God, for all the world offers us connected with sin? Shall we any longer, by our infidelities and inconsistency, draw down the full weight of the avenging hand of God, which his tender mercy withholds? Ah! no: but let us profess ourselves this day true servants of the Lord, and adhere constantly to him unto the end of our lives. Then shall we hear from the mouth of our Redeemer, on the last day, these agreeable words: "Come, thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord. Because thou hast been faithful in small things, I will now place thee over many things." Evermore shall we share in all the joys and glory of God. Nevermore shall the tear of woe gush out, nor pain nor sorrow afflict. Evermore shall we be, not supplicating like subjects, but seated as kings on thrones, with crowns of glory in the kingdom of heaven. Amen, sweet Jesus!—Amen.

SERMON XI.

ON CHARITY.

"Communicating alms to the Saints in their necessities."

ROM., c. xii., v. 13.

OF all the virtues the Christian religion prescribes there is not any one the practice of which ought to be more common and more familiar to us than that of charity or alms-giving; not only on account of the excellency of this virtue, which is so closely connected with the love of God, wherein the plenitude of the whole law consists, as St. Paul declares that it cannot subsist without it; but likewise on account of the many and inestimable advantages which we are assured in holy writ are annexed to, and inseparable from, the proper and judicious distribution of charity. In one place it appears that this divine virtue has the force of appeasing the anger of God, and rendering him propitious unto us. In another, that charity is capable of drawing down the greatest blessings even in this life. Elsewhere we are told by Jesus Christ himself, that "Even a glass of water given in his name shall not want its reward;" and that "if we deal generously with others for his sake, the same will be returned in great, large, and plentiful measures." These are promises of rewards, but threats are also held out against those who do not practise the works of charity, as is fully laid down in the Gospel of St. Luke, where the unfaithful steward, puffed up and elated by his prosperity, thought himself perfectly safe whilst acting contrary to all the laws of justice, in squandering away his master's substance.

But the master returning, and the misconduct being notorious, the steward is brought to account, and sentence immediately pronounced—"Thou shalt be no longer steward."

In this parable we have a striking figure of the strict account we shall be brought to at the tribunal of Christ, the supreme and just Judge of the living and the dead, for our administration in this life; that is, for the use we make of the substance Divine Providence is pleased to commit into our hands. At present we are very apt to think we can use it as we please, and that possession confers a right which no laws can circumscribe. Almighty God entertains quite different notions, and will make us one day sensible, we were no more than stewards or under-agents to Providence in the administration of the property committed to our care. So that if we fail to fulfil the duties of that character by a mismanagement of the means we are possessed of, we must be punished accordingly.

It is therefore highly incumbent on each of you in particular to reflect seriously on this subject, and lay your lives under the strictest regulations, by following in every point the direction of our Saviour in the Gospel: "Make friends unto yourselves of the mammon of iniquity, who (when you fail) may receive you into the seats of everlasting bliss." Notwithstanding these strong and unquestionable assurances of the excellence as well as the many blessings that flow from the exercise of charity, very many there are who seem to be no way solicitous about it. Heaven forbid I should mean by this observation to overlook the charitable disposition of many Christians, who have always their hearts open and their hands stretched forth for the relief of the necessitous and poor. But yet it cannot but be observed that too many neglect the practice of alms-giving, or confine their charity within too narrow bounds. This half performance of an essential duty, as well as the neglect of it, calls loudly on the ministers of the Church of God for their best exertions in laying before the faithful the magnitude of their obligations on this head. In making this general remark I feel how much I am bound by my duty to you, myself, and my God, to examine this heaven-born virtue, charity, and to enforce the practice of it on the grounds of duty and benefit. All duties draw benefits or rewards in their train; but as no virtue is more sublime than the practice of charity, so none draws after it greater blessings upon mortals. We shall see this in detail by examining with me two distinct propositions wherein you all are most materially concerned:—first, the obligation you

lie under of practising charity—secondly, the manner of discharging, and the blessings arising from the discharge of this obligation.

First.—The obligation of charity, I mean that branch of it which consists in affording relief to your poor and infirm brethren—is grounded on the present dispensation of Divine Providence, and a positive command of the Almighty. Whoever considers the various conditions in this world, must see that some are in the greatest poverty and want, whilst others abound not only with the necessities and conveniences of life, but even with its comforts and superfluities. Is it then to be imagined that the Almighty Father of all could have ordained so great a distinction and inequality among men, by favouring a few and overlooking the wants of the rest? No: this were highly inconsistent with the wisdom and goodness of God, the first fruitful Cause and universal Parent of all things; whose bounty is so great as to provide plentifully in due time for the very birds of the air, and the beasts of the field. All men by nature are the same; subject to the same infirmities, liable to the same wants. Of all the animals of the creation, man appears in his primeval state to be the most miserable, the most abject, and the most forlorn. Equally unable to help himself as to call for help, he seems the outcast of the creation. Other creatures come into life with covering, and powers to help themselves, but man comes naked, poor, and helpless; and immediately proclaims his miseries by his cries. The poor become victims to poverty and want, disease and death; whilst their more favoured fellow-creature riots in all the enjoyment of unqualified luxury. Here the poor man, full of sores, calls at the proud man's gate, but he calls in vain—he does not call in vain; the dogs come and lick his sores. There the Christian brute turns his back on human woes. Here we see the innocent little one, who never knew a crime, shivering and pining; there the young heir who never knew a want. Where, then, are the means to smoothen these evils; where the necessary funds for maintaining this seemingly abandoned part of the creation? In the hands of the rich and wealthy men of the world. By this disposition the infinite wisdom of God shines forth in the most conspicuous manner; for although he could have supplied the wants of the poor by himself without the intervention of any other, yet he chose to lay this obligation upon the rich, in order to unite the different orders of men in the closest ties, and make the very difference of their conditions instrumental to their eternal happiness; sanctifying the poor by

patience and suffering, and the rich by their benevolence and charity to the poor.

If, then, the poor are forced, from the misery entailed upon their state, to cry out for relief unto the rich, these are no less obliged to hear the cries and relieve the necessities of the poor; by which it appears that the rich man is no less made for the poor, than the poor man for the rich, according to the beautiful remark of St. Augustine, however distant and opposite these two characters may appear. The great chain which unites all mankind in one family, is principally displayed in the mutual exchange of good offices among men; the poor in supplying the comforts of the rich, the rich by charity softening the evils of the poor. It is the poor man by his toils that supplies the profusion of the rich man's table, as well as the splendour of his equipage. The rich in return is bound by charity to soften the evils of his poor brother, and to look to him chiefly when oppressed by poverty, infirmity, nakedness, or want. The providence of God and the wisdom of his ways are seen by this dispensation, whereby the use, not the abuse, are shown to men, of poverty to the poor, and riches to the rich.

In various instances the exercise of this virtue is seen and admired in our land: no country perhaps affords instances of charities better applied, and among these, that foundation in the capital, the Lying-in Hospital, holds a distinguished rank: but still I say that charity is too limited where the calls are so numerous. It must be acknowledged that no civilized country abounds with more appearance of poverty than ours. The general face of the land is covered, not with the warm cottages of an encouraged peasantry, not with the waving fields and lowing herds of an industrious yeomanry, but in general with miserable hovels, where in several instances the light and the smoke make the same entrance and exit. I will not pretend to say that physical and political as well as moral causes may not be assigned for this evil: but I shall never profane this sacred chair to the discussion of any subjects, but those which tend to the formation of the Christian, and to which alone my ministry calls me. If we circumscribe our views within the walls of this city alone, how great is the field to call forth the humanity and to exercise the charity of the benevolent and the good? Did you but for one day attend the visitations of our clergy in discharge of their duty, Lord God! what doleful scenes would be seen! Want, sickness, and nakedness would alternately and in various shapes assail your view, and strike you with horror. Here are scenes

revealed which bashfulness conceals from the public view; and pining children calling upon their heart-broken mother for the morsel she has not to give.

Waiving particular details of distress I shall beg to ask where is the relief? In your pockets. You are commanded in holy writ to "honour the Almighty with your substance." How so? Because it is a real honour and glory unto God to see his providence justified before man. Now the providence of God never appears in a fairer view than when the different orders of men are occupied in assisting each other. Whereas if this mutual assistance be refused, if our brethren are suffered to perish for want of charitable aid, does it not appear that the Divinity must fall under the severe imputation of abandoning the greater part of the human kind, by exposing them to misery and want? For this reason the holy fathers and doctors of the Church in their instructions to the faithful on this subject, never failed to lay it down, not only as a breach of charity, but as a downright injustice and rapine, to refuse assistance to the poor; inasmuch as they are deprived of a portion of wealth which the Almighty put into your hands merely for their subsistence; and the Lord will lay at your door the sufferings which fell upon your brethren for want of that contribution, that charity which you withheld. Thus St. Gregory says: "When we afford necessities to the poor we give them nothing of ours, but restore them their own; we fulfil a debt of justice rather than accomplish a work of mercy." Of this the primitive Christians were so far convinced, that they were not satisfied with giving away for charitable uses a part of their substance, but sold all they had, that all might equally benefit by what riches the great and munificent Parent of all had blessed them with.

Although I am very far from laying down this as a rule, yet it cannot but serve as a severe reproach to a great many who are so selfish and interested as to imagine that all they possess was given them for their sole and separate use, without the least regard to the wants of others. They abound in every thing, yet they think they never have enough; and by centering their thoughts in themselves, never look abroad upon that part of mankind which in the views and disposition of providence were to be maintained by their care and munificence. But let men of this inhuman character consider, that the very persons whom they now despise, are, notwithstanding all the vain distinctions of pride and ambition, no less than their own flesh and blood, as the Holy Ghost declares: "Do not despise your own flesh." Let them con-

sider that Almighty God, in introducing them into this world, had their happiness no less at heart than that of the highest men in power; and that one day they may be placed with Lazarus in possession of all the glory and riches of heaven, whilst themselves are sunk with Dives in the deep and gloomy caverns of eternal misery and pain. Let them consider that as they received all they possess by the free gift of the Lord, to make good use of it in this life; so he is at liberty to call back his own, and deprive them of this substance by sudden and unforeseen misfortunes. Turn your eyes around, and on every side you will behold instances of calamities swallowing up the successful gathering of many years. I do not say that insensibility to the wants of the poor produces always those temporal reverses; because to the deep and impenetrable councils of the Lord no mortal is admitted: but I do say these reverses in life are often in consequence of such flinty conduct. On the other hand it is remarkable that where charity to the poor is a leading feature, even in this life, as an earnest of what will happen in the next, prosperity, tranquillity, and domestic comfort crown that man and his family!

The debt we owe the poor is as positive a debt as any we contract. "To you the poor are given in charge." Their wants, their sufferings, their miseries we are bound to attend to and relieve. Unless we discharge these duties, we cannot be said to fulfil the law which enjoins us to "love our neighbour as ourselves," and unless we fulfil the law, no hopes remain of ever entering the kingdom of heaven. How can it be said we love our neighbour or fulfil the law, if our neighbour's wants form no part of our care; or, if knowing his wants, we refuse to relieve him? By our sedulous watchful care, we generally anticipate want in ourselves, and seldom know it but by name. Before pinching cold comes we cover ourselves warm; before hunger comes we eat, and often drink when not thirsty; but the shivering, naked, hungry poor, what becomes of them?—they are not thought of. "Let Providence take care of them." Yes, Providence will take care of them. He is their Father as well as yours, their Protector as well as yours, their Rewarder as well as yours, their God as well as yours, and he will punish you for not employing a share of that substance which he has deposited in your hands in removing those wants by acts of charity, and smoothing those evils to which our fellow creature is liable. This is the true end for which substance has been placed by the Almighty in your hands; first to satisfy the reasonable wants of your families, and after that to give everything superfluous

to the poor. The patrimony of the poor, their property is in your hands. The laws of nature, as well as the laws of God, demand from you a share of that property in relief of your indigent brother. The false distinctions created by property are removed by charity, and it is by the exercise of this virtue that the views of Providence are fulfilled in conferring great abundance on some, and great want on others. Had we no other proof for the obligation of charity than the consideration drawn from those views of the Lord in establishing the different conditions of life, I think it were sufficient for that purpose : but what sets this obligation still in a clearer light is its being expressly laid down in various places in the Mosaic law, as well as the law of grace. In the fifteenth chapter of Deuteronomy the Lord, speaking to his people, says: "I command you,"—observe the stern authoritative manner wherein the Godhead speaks, "I command you to open your hand to your brother in want, and to the poor that dwell in the land in which you live."

Our Saviour expresses himself nearly to the same purpose, when, speaking to his disciples, he says, "As for the rest give alms." St. Paul enforces the same obligation in the eighth chapter of his second epistle to the Corinthians, where he orders the faithful "to supply the wants of the poor out of their own abundance." Now, a refusal on our parts, or a neglect of supplying by charity the wants of the poor, is a violation of a positive command, a downright robbery, for which Jesus Christ will one day demand satisfaction. The exercise of charity is rewarded beyond all other virtues, by an immediate internal consolation, which flows from the removal of distress, the relief of want. But should any of you be insensible to the fine feelings that arise from the exercise of charity, or what is of more consequence, to the obligation prescribed by the law, let him attend to the words of Jesus Christ, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, where the breach of this command of charity is the only cause alleged by our Saviour for condemning the reprobate to hell fire, "Go, ye accursed, into eternal fire;"—mind the reason "for I was hungry, and ye gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me not to drink; I was naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not." Upon asking where they had seen him in this state of suffering, he adds, "Verily I say unto you, so long as ye did it not to one of these little ones, ye did it not to me."

Here you are to observe, with St. Augustine, that our Saviour says not, Depart from me, ye accursed, into everlast-

ing fire, because you plundered your neighbour of his property, although this is a crime of great magnitude, and worthy of eternal punishment ; but because you refused him the assistance he stood in need of, when it was in your power to grant it ; as if the want of charity was the only crime God would notice, or that it was so heinous in its nature as to absorb and overwhelm all other crimes in the deep vortex of its extensive guilt.

Without charity, therefore, you can never expect the mercies of God ; and the exercise of charity is the best foundation to expect those mercies. It is not to be questioned that the person who bestows charity is more benefited by the gift, than the person on whom it is conferred ; because in the one case the gift only confers relief, limited in extent and short in duration ; but it returns benefit to the donor, unbounded in extent and eternal in duration. On the grounds, therefore, of self-interest, it is clear, that charity should be the most familiar with us of all the virtues prescribed by religion. The desire of gain and benefit is the prevailing principle with men in this world." Now what gain, what benefit is comparable to the glory of heaven, which shall be the reward of those who exercise charity upon earth : " Come, you blessed of my Father, and possess the glory prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Was it because they were pious and meek, and humble, and godly, and strictly honest in all their dealings ? No : but because charity to their poor, forlorn, suffering fellow-creatures was familiar to them ; " I was hungry, and you give me to eat ; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink ; I was naked, and you covered me ; sick, and in prison, and you visited me."

From what has been said, it appears very plain that no point of our duty is more strongly enforced in the holy writings than the obligation of charity ; and this obligation is supported on one side by the most sublime rewards, and on the other by the most dreadful terrors. It is, notwithstanding, a lamentable truth, that this obligation is very rarely discharged. You all know several men of good fortunes or easy circumstances, who are almost strangers to this duty of religion. Although the income is large, yet nothing can be spared for the poor. Rank, retinue, equipage, living, gambling, racing, devour all, and devour the poor also. Out of several hundreds spent ever year in this manner, not one poor person is relieved ! All demands are supplied but those of charity. I recall that expression—all demands are not supplied. Debts are contracted and unpaid ; suits at law are commenced ;

distress and trouble, and mortgages, and sales follow, and poverty comes galloping over the property of that man who has an unfeeling heart for the miseries of the poor.

Stop one instant and reflect with me how many lives could be preserved by a small share of what is spent in this criminal extravagance. How many young persons saved from the everlasting stain of infamy and dishonour, which their poverty generally brings upon them! how many head of families restored to their numerous offspring, who for want of small relief now lie languishing in the gloomy horrors of the most hideous confinement! Yet the vanity of cutting a dash in the world, as they emphatically call it, prevails so far over these moving considerations as to leave no room for the performance of any one work of charity during the whole course of a year. But should I this day ask those dashers in the world—those hearts of iron which feel not the woes of humanity—for what purpose did the infinite wisdom of God place so much wealth in their hands? Was it to be wasted in luxury and riot, vice and folly, whilst so many Christians, their flesh and blood, are perishing for want of the necessaries of life? Or what answer will they be able to make the great and dreadful Judge of the living and the dead, when he will upbraid them, as St. Ambrose says, before the whole world, in these words, “Inhuman and unchristian men, how came you to abuse the riches I bestowed upon you? You could line the walls of your houses with purple hangings and the richest tapestry, but you never thought of clothing your fellow-creature in his distress; you could even adorn your horses with magnificent trapping, but you never would take notice of the rags several Christians were scarcely half covered with before your eyes.” Then shall the Lord break forth in words of fire: “Begone from me.” Why so, O Lord? Because they felt not for their fellow-creature—they had bowels, not of charity, but of brass; mercy was far from them: “No mercy now for those who have shown no mercy to others.” Let then the just apprehensions of meeting with such inflexible rigour from the hands of the Lord rouse up our religion, and bend our attention upon the exercise of this divine virtue, charity, which you now find to be so essential a point in a Christian life, that without the exercise of charity we cannot fulfil one of the greatest obligations of the law of God, and consequently can form no claim to life everlasting. Charity, to become a virtue, must be directed by method and regulated by order. Of these I come now to treat, as well as a short view of the advantages arising from the

practice of this virtue, to which I shall solicit a continuance of your attention.

Second—Order and method should be distinguishing features in the practice of all virtues, especially of charity. For this end the first rule concerning charity is, that every one divide with the poor in proportion to his means. On this subject I cannot lay before you a finer lesson than old Tobias gave his son a little before his death: "Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person: for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee. According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly: if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity. For alms deliver from all sin and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the most high God to all them that give it." Here the Spirit of God lays down the most excellent rules, and discloses the great blessings which flow from the practice of charity. In these days, as well as in former times, the practice of charity is most discernible among the poorer class of people. The helpless widow is seen to slip into the hands of the poor a part of her little means which would not be ill retained for herself and her poor little orphans—I say not ill retained, because what may be retained without a crime, becomes a high virtue in the grant, by sharing with the representative of Jesus Christ. The poor labourer in the country cheerfully receives and generously divides with the itinerant beggar the homely hard-earned morsel, as well as the fire-side of his hut. Look to this, you proud and lofty ones of this world, and learn instruction from this scene; you who can well afford charity, and still keep your hands for ever shut up, and your bowels steeled to every sentiment of mercy. Order here becomes inverted, to behold the poor helping the poor, indigence aiding indigence, and the sorrowful and afflicted wiping away sorrow and affliction. "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And to you, O rich, who refuse mercy to the poor, I say with Jesus Christ in the Gospel: "Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." Not that riches are an evil, but the abuse of riches, in denying to the poor that charity which the rich are specially bound to bestow. Now, supposing a man sincerely disposed to fulfil his duty, how far doth his obligation run with regard to charity, if wealthy? Tobias has answered that question: "If you have much, give abundantly." If mediocrity and a long

family be his lot? Make Jesus Christ one of that family. Lay out on the poor what would be necessary for the support of one additional child. Jesus Christ will repay his own debt. He will moreover bless that family and raise it up.

All men are obliged, under pain of mortal sin, to give unto the poor the superfluous part of their fortunes, after supplying the necessary calls of family, rank, and condition. For although men possess their substance, divines observe, it is under such restrictions and limitations as deprive them of the free use of it; because by a divine command we are bound to assist and relieve the poor, and the superfluous part of every man's fortune has always been called by the holy fathers the patrimony of the poor; and they cannot be deprived of their share, the right they possess, without a most flagrant injustice. This right in some cases, such as those of extreme necessity, extends so far, that the rich are obliged to retrench and cut away whatever belongs to decency or fashion, in order to bestow on the poor the means of preserving life. It is a great misfortune that no one can be scarcely convinced of having more than is barely sufficient for the support of himself and family. Were this true, I acknowledge they may stand acquitted before God—but who are those that excuse themselves in this manner? Those who find money to throw away upon every other occasion. One time it is a man, who from the vanity of shining in dress, lays out every year large sums on the most costly clothes, and soon after throws them away to substitute others at equal expense in their room. Another time, a person of the most excessive sensuality, who thinks nothing too nice, too new, too dear, to gratify his palate, and thus at one meal will consume more than would suffice to entertain one hundred poor men. Sometimes it is one who is known to lavish a great part of his income on horses, or hounds, or cards—for extravagance, and folly, and vice, money is found, but not one shilling can be spared for the craving miseries of a poor distressed family. Let all those retrench these excesses, so unworthy not only of a Christian, but of any rational being: and live with that temperance and sobriety St. Paul recommends, as well in dress and figure, as in living and diversions, and then they will be able to supply abundantly not only the wants of their families, but also those of the poor.

But it may be asked, if property be one's own, may he not dispose of it as he likes? I have answered that question before, and St. Chrysostom answers it now: "It does not follow that because you have property you possess the right of

throwing it away ; as it appears from the most solid principles of religion, that the Almighty intended the abundance you are possessed of to serve as a public and plentiful resource for the necessities of the poor." To dismiss this consideration, I join in opinion with the soundest divines, and recommend you most earnestly to lay by every week, every month, or every year, a certain portion of your substance, according to your respective abilities, to be distributed among the poor ; introducing thereby Jesus Christ into your domestic economy, and making him one of your family. Thus you discharge a most material obligation, whereon perhaps your eternal salvation depends.

Next to order and method, the time at which we are obliged to give charity comes under consideration. To this it may be answered in general, that every one that has it in his power to do it, is obliged to relieve his neighbour as often as he stands in great need of his assistance. St. John remarks : "How can the love of God remain with that man, who, seeing his neighbour in necessity, shuts up his bowels of mercy, and refuses him relief?" For the better discerning those occasions which bring us under a heavy obligation of conscience, divines generally distinguish two sorts of necessity. The one extreme, wherein our brethren are perishing for want ; in this case every one sees how far his obligations extend. The other great and considerable, when our neighbour is likely to be reduced to unusual straits and hardships ; such as poverty, sickness, or confinement : even in these circumstances, divines say, there is no one but is obliged in conscience to give him whatever relief he can afford. Why so ? Because that mention being made so often in Holy Writ of people being damned for want of giving charity, this obligation must occur frequently in the commerce of life : and of consequence cannot be restricted or limited to the occasions we call extreme, which happen but very seldom.

Now I appeal to yourselves, can anything be more common than to see these very occasions wherein we are strictly bound to assist our neighbours, overlooked by those who are possessed of ample means to afford such relief ? They will tell you, with a seeming air of charity, that they would readily stretch their hands to one in real want, but that they meet none of this description. Are not those in real want who walk every day naked before your eyes, exposed to all the injuries of the air and all inclemency of the seasons ; whose misery is so great that they look much more like animated shadows than living men ? Consult their naked limbs and contracted

frames, their dejected looks and emaciated visages ; are not these strong and plain indications of the most miserable want ? Are not those in want, and in great want, who lie stretched on a bed of suffering in the utmost pain and agony, for whole weeks and months together, without any other relief to ease their limbs than a handful of rotted straw ; or to cool the raging heat of a burning fever, but a few drops of tasteless water ? Is not the poor honest tradesmen in want, and in very great want, who, through the severity of a relentless creditor, sees his utensils, his little furniture, his all, seized upon ; himself cast into prison, a wife and his whole family reduced from want of his labour and assistance to the lowest ebb of misery ? Are not those in exceedingly great want, who, by unforeseen disasters and casualties, common in life, have been reduced from a certain degree of competence, decency, and comfort, to sudden ruin and deep distress ; and yet restrained by a certain shame which always attends virtue in distress, they sink deeper in their miseries, rather than by declaring them, to avail themselves of the resource common to all those who suffer in poverty ? There is no day but you may behold instances of this kind, did you but look about, and examine with a little care and attention. Not even an hour in the day but you may hear them either cry out for your assistance, or reproach you in dumb silence with cruel insensibility. But far from listening to their moving cries, or keen but just reproaches, you seem to triumph over their suffering, by displaying all your vanity before their eyes. Sad contrast ! Christians abusing by criminal excesses the property lent them by the Lord, and refusing to pay the debt they owe to charity ; whilst their fellow-man, their brother in Christ, heir to the same hopes, the same promises, the same rewards, lies pining in woe and want, in calamity, sickness and pain. “Tell it not in Gath ; publish it not in Askalon ;” the poor call on the rich for aid, and the poor are put off with a cold “God help you !” Yes, the Lord God will help the poor ; but he requires that you also help them ; or rather that you help yourselves, since relieving the poor is productive of the greatest advantage to mankind.

“Happy is the man,” saith the royal prophet, “who takes notice of the indigent and poor ;” and thrice happy may we pronounce him, since he has taken the surest method imaginable to draw down upon himself the choicest blessings of heaven, with regard to this present life, but more especially with regard to the life to come. That charity towards the poor is attended with greatest advantages even

in this life, is confirmed by the authority of the Scriptures and the experience of all men. The Spirit of God, speaking in the twenty-eighth chapter of the book of Proverbs, says, "He that giveth unto the poor shall never want." This promise relates not only to this life, but to the next, because the word "never," being interminable in extent, can only apply to eternity, to which the world has no claim whatsoever. Besides, the man of charity shall succeed and prosper in all his undertakings, as we are assured in the chapter following. "He that pities the poor and relieves him lendeth to the Lord upon usury, and he will repay it." He will not only pay the principal, but the usurious, the multiplied interest, by prospering and blessing all your undertakings. This is a natural and necessary consequence of getting God into your debt. Almighty, all-powerful, all-bountiful, as he is, he pays not his engagements by arithmetical calculation. He pays, or, in other words, he rewards like a God. He presses down, he crams close, he overflows, as the Gospel says in various places; and the charity you bestow on the poor he considers as an obligation conferred upon himself. "Verily I say unto you, so long as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren you have done it unto me."

Your own experience on this subject, and your observation, must be great. Look about you, and see who are those who thrive most, I mean by fair and honest practices in the world. Are they not men of charity, who have always their hands open to the poor? It is a mystery to others, who are only "wise according to the flesh," as St. Paul styles it, how everything prospers in their hands. Whilst their neighbours all around meet the severest disappointments, either from the infidelity of servants, the contrivance of enemies, storms by sea, or dangers by land, they alone seem to be exempt from public as well as private calamity, and stand secure, as it were, from the evils which are scattered among other men. But what is the cause of all this? A particular protection from heaven which they have obtained by their plentiful alms; whereas others, by their avaricious dispositions and insensibility to the poor, have made themselves obnoxious to a curse much like unto that the prophet pronounced against a part of Judea, whereby fertility was destroyed;—"Mountains of Gelboe, let neither dew nor rain fall on you." I would not be understood to mean that prosperity in this life and exemption from severe trials are the reward of charity to the poor. But I do say they commonly attend it; and the exceptions are generally marked by circumstances wherein the Almighty God

foresees that prosperity would be prejudicial, or probably an insurmountable obstacle to salvation.

All temporal blessings, however grand, must fade away in the consideration of the great spiritual blessings which ever attend the practice of charity to the poor. Of these blessings some consist in atoning for past sins, reconciling you with heaven, and screening you from all danger in the last dreadful passage from time and life into eternity. That charity to the poor has the power of appeasing the wrath of God, and reconciling us with the Most High, is most certain; for the Gospel tells you so. "Give alms, and, behold, all things are made clean unto you." Not that this virtue has in itself the force of remitting sin, which is peculiar to the sacrament of penance; but because its excellence is so great, and the exercise of it so agreeable unto God, that he cannot in some measure forbear looking down in pity on those who practise it. Divines are agreed that this virtue is surely productive of those spiritual advantages in consequence of the assurances the Almighty has given us to this purpose, both in the Old and the New Law. For if we consult the Scriptures, we shall find the most urgent motives for the practice of charity: "Extend your hand to the poor, that mercy may light on you. As water quenches fire, so do alms resist sin. These are the fruits of charity, to find mercy and life everlasting. Charity covereth a multitude of sins." Such are the great effects of charity to the poor; and the holy fathers, St. Ambrose in particular, have gone so far as to say, that alms to the poor are the only effectual means of salvation those have to depend upon who are deeply immersed in vice. This appears very remarkable in the impious king of Babylon. Nebuchodonosor, whom the Almighty degraded in this life below the rank of a beast: Go, says the prophet Daniel, "Redeem thou thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor." Here it is to be remarked, that this prince was guilty of the most abominable crime, that of usurping the adoration due alone to God—this crime, though great, was yet capable of being blotted out by alms. Nothing can resist the power of charity; but its peculiar efficacy and virtue are seen in the dreadful passage from time to eternity—that awful period which the just beholds with terror, the sinner with horror. Then shall charity rise up and cover you from the anger of the living God, and conduct your souls to the mansions of repose. Then shall the Lord repay his debts for the charities bestowed for his sake on the poor. How? "In the evil day the Lord will deliver him." From what? From the fury of the devil ready

to devour him ; from the gulf of hell gaping to swallow him, and from the justice of God ready to fall on him. "In the evil day," during the existence of mortality, before life departs, when evils and terrors and dangers flock about to assail the conscious sinner ; charity to the poor shall then protect that sinner, and compel God to call him—in a moment of mercy, "the Lord will deliver him."

In the day I speak of, "in the evil day," what will become of those who abuse their riches by penury or prodigality, by want or waste ? What cruel apprehensions must tear them on approaching the judgment seat of God, whose laws they trampled on, whose monitions they despised, and whose wants they overlooked in the persons of the poor ? What expectation, what grounds to hope for mercy, which they themselves refuse to the poor ? All the delusions of life are then clearly seen, when the door of eternity is just ready to open. If you wish to avoid the dreadful punishments which await sinners in eternity, and for eternity, take care to attend during life to the claims of the poor, to their wants and miseries. Infuse the balm of charity into their sorrows, bind up their woes with commiseration and relief, and Jesus Christ shall break all troubles before you. "Bend down thy ear to the poor, and pay thy debt," as the wise man directs. It is equally your duty as it is your interest. Proportionably to your fortunes, to your circumstances, and situation, "give, and it shall be given." Be generous to your God in the persons of the poor, and God will be generous to you. Give often—never pass by distress unnoticed. Give indifferently to all in want ; but if opportunity offers, let those who are united to you by the ties of blood have a preference : for this is the order of charity acknowledged by all divines, and grounded on the law of nature. Next to them consider the true disciples of Christ, according to the directions of St. Paul : but distress and want in your fellow-creature, no matter where found, should always be relieved. All mankind are your brethren ; all mankind, therefore, are objects of your charity. When charity flows from you, remove natural pity and commiseration, which are human virtues only, and turn your thoughts upon Jesus Christ, and recognise him if possible in the persons of the poor. Think of his command, think of his love, think how much you owe him, and how little you pay him in relieving his poor representatives. Let neither vanity nor ostentation accompany charity : this would subject you to reproaches and the censures of the Pharisees by our Saviour. Convey charity in private and in public : in

private, because Christ, who sees you in private, will reward you in public; in public, "that your good works may shine before men," and induce them to bless and magnify the great Father of all. Where no danger of vanity or ostentation occurs, I prefer the charity afforded in public; because of the edification afforded by the publicity of a good act, and the emulation created by the force of good example.

Without being the particular advocate of any particular charity, I have endeavoured this day to lay before you the obligations you all lie under of practising charity, as well as the advantages which flow from the practice of that virtue. Never let coldness or indifference to the wants of the poor, to their sufferings or miseries, form any longer a blot on your conduct; for charity to the poor draws down, even in this life, very singular advantages, but after this life it will infallibly introduce us to the embraces of God in the glory of heaven. Amen.

SERMON XII.

ON RESTITUTION.

"Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all."—MATTH., c. xviii., v. 26.

SUCH was the entreaty made by the unfaithful servant mentioned in the Gospel, who being deeply indebted to his lord, and knowing that forgiveness depended upon payment of the last farthing, he cried out, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." In order to attain life everlasting it is not enough alone to die to our sins, and forsake them entirely; it is, moreover, necessary to live in the full accomplishment of justice. "Who is the man," says the royal prophet, "who shall dwell in thy house, O Lord? He that walketh without sin and performeth justice." Now justice implies the full observance of the law, both in respect to God and our neighbour; not only in paying to the Almighty the honour due unto him as supreme Master of the world, but also in preserving to our neighbour all his rights entire and inviolate. And yet few there are, even among those who pretend to a considerable share of religion, that pay the necessary attention to so material and indispensable a duty. We daily hear the loudest complaints of the most atrocious injustices—every city, every street, rings with the cries of the injured and oppressed. Scarcely can you meet one who has not endured the severest injuries—this man is despoiled of his property;

another chicaned out of his lawful pretensions; another wounded in the tenderest part—his character and fame. But do we hear of any reparation being made for so many heavy and enormous grievances? Where is the man whose property is restored, whose character is cleared up and justified, and whose rights are allowed? I appeal to your own experience and knowledge of the world, if this be not a thing almost unheard of. A criminal and fatal omission in the discharge of this duty, so discernible among Christians, demands this day the best exertions of the ministers of the Gospel. The dearest interests of society, as well as your eternal salvation, being connected with the faithful discharge of the precept of restitution, I feel myself called upon to lay before you,

First—How strict and indispensable is the obligation of restitution; and,

Secondly—What persons are particularly obliged thereunto.

The consideration of these two propositions will comprehend vast matter for your instruction, and, I hope, improvement. Lend me your steady attention, and unite with me in applying to the Father of Lights, for that docile disposition necessary to hear his word, in order to bring forth fruit unto life everlasting. Almighty Father! Essential Justice! give thy servant impressive words, and my hearers tractable hearts; that hearing, they may hear thy law on restitution, and square their lives by its principles.

First—A duty prescribed by divine command, that has the greatest and most lasting influence on our salvation, must necessarily be reputed a duty of the strictest obligation. Such is the nature of restitution. The law of God orders us to restore whatever we have acquired unjustly, and orders it on the severest terms, in every circumstance of life, under pain of forfeiting all our rights to the kingdom of heaven. “Thou shalt not steal,” says the Lord; by which we are not only forbidden to take away by force or fraud, but also to keep unjustly our neighbour’s substance: for as the end of the divine law was to provide for the safety of mankind in general, and to secure every man in his property from any outward injustice, this end would not have been sufficiently compassed, were it lawful for any one to retain peaceably what he had unjustly usurped; this detention being as real a prejudice, and as detrimental to our neighbour, as any violence. If the law says, “Thou shalt not covet,” which, being only an act of the mind, is yet highly criminal before God; how much more so unjustly to detain property in our hands, or to deprive

our neighbour of his substance? And here, my brethren, I cannot but deplore the error, or rather the affected ignorance of some people, who, because they were not the first or immediate authors of the injustice, would fain think themselves free from reproach, and not bound to restitution. Knowing themselves possessed of another man's substance, they may even say they are ready to restore it when called for, but think themselves not obliged to make the first advances. Is not this, I ask you, trifling with God? It is not eluding, in a crafty and criminal manner, the most sacred laws of equity and reason? The obligation of restitution is, moreover, grounded on the love we owe our neighbour, in virtue of the divine injunction: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." How can we pretend to love him whilst we retain unjustly in our hands a portion of his substance, the privation of which has perhaps reduced him to the lowest misery?

You probably have been witnesses to many scenes of this nature. Traders have been ruined, industry crippled, and whole families overturned, by the private evil doings of a single man. Many have declined insensibly, and gradually sunk into indigence, by being wrongfully kept out of a part of their substance for a considerable length of time. Any detention of a just debt after the legal time of payment comes round, is unfair, and a sin; and this sin increases in proportion to the injury sustained by such unfair detention. Tradesmen's and labourers' demands should be instantly discharged on application; otherwise a species of robbery is incurred, besides a species of another sin that cries to heaven for vengeance—oppression of the poor; for, disguise it as you may under the errors of a false conscience, it is oppression not to pay working people what you owe them. But the trifle you owed was small, you may say—the more guilty I say; because the smaller the debt the easier the payment: besides, what you call small, may be of a great consequence to the owner; what you call a trifle, may cause the downfall of a fair and honest dealer; what you call a trifle, I say, would have prevented many a mournful sigh and melting tear, the moans of sorrow, and the tortures of despair: what you call a trifle, I say, would have maintained joy and plenty throughout a numerous family, and preserved their grey hairs from the infamy, if I may so call it, their indigence has brought upon them. Now I ask, how can actions of this nature be consistent with the love our neighbour has a right, an indispensable right, to expect at our hands? Can a man who deprives or withholds from another his substance, or a part of his substance, and becomes thereby in-

strumental to all the misfortunes he meets with in the world, can such a man be said to love his neighbour, and love him as he ought? Reflect one moment how tender you are of your own interests, and how jealous in preserving them; would you tamely submit, would you allow, would you be glad that another made the least attempt against your fortune? Would you not consider him as an enemy were he even inclined to do so? Undoubtedly you would. Turn then your thoughts inwardly upon yourselves, and examine how guilty you may be on this head by withholding the property of your neighbour. Consider thus withholding it is inconsistent with the love you owe your neighbour; and consider that the love of your neighbour is the second great precept of the law, without which it is impossible to please God, or obtain life everlasting. Besides, the law allows but three titles to property; and the law of the land is here grounded on the divine law—purchase, acquisition, or donation. Now he who withholds what he neither purchased, nor acquired by his labour, nor holds by any grant given him, acts in direct opposition to all the laws of justice, and violates every principle of the law of reason, which is also the law of nature, for which the Lord God will not hold him guiltless.

The obligation of restitution being laid before you, grounded on principles of justice, mutual love, and common reason, it appears to me scarcely necessary to establish it on that pillar of light on which I always like to establish all doctrinal points—the holy Scripture. Here the Lord speaks: “If anything be taken away unlawfully, restitution must be made the owner.” He, therefore, who refuses to restore, when it is in his power to do so, transgresses a divine command, and incurs the pains of that transgression—the loss of God above, and eternal sorrows below. The great apostle, St. Paul, says: “Rapacious men will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” By the word, “Rapacious,” we are to understand, St. Austin explains it, those that appropriate to themselves the substance of other people.” The holy father goes farther, and says, “Non tollitur peccatum donec restituatur ablatum:” No injustice can ever be forgiven, until restitution be made. It must either be made actually: or sincere dispositions formed in the heart to make it as soon as possible, otherwise the sin will not be forgiven. Deplorable then must the situation of a Christian be, who, feeling the obligation of restitution, refuses to comply therewith. Let me tell such unhappy persons, let me warn them, that so long as they persist in such pernicious intentions, they can neither hope for the mercies of God in

this life, nor his glory in the next. Although they should pray, and fast, and give alms; although they should fulfil all the other precepts of the law, and refuse to comply with the obligation of restitution, so long will they remain enemies to God, and their own most cruel enemies also. That portion of their neighbour's substance which they retain unlawfully in their hands, and the long chain of evils which often is necessarily entailed thereby, will for ever be crying out for vengeance unto the Lord, like the blood of Abel so inhumanly shed by a barbarous brother; and the Lord, who is essential justice, cannot but be moved thereby, and in his own good time will pour out his wrath on the guilty usurper's head.

You may ask, perhaps, is not sincere repentance sufficient before God? Sincere repentance truly is sufficient; but observe, there can be no such thing as sincere repentance, without making restitution: for repentance necessarily implies, not only a detestation of sin, in general, and of our own in particular, but also a fixed and determinate will to observe every material point of the law; and as restitution is one of these points, it follows, that no man can be supposed to have a true sorrow for his injustices, without conceiving at the same time a real and effectual desire of repairing them. Many, notwithstanding, are daily seen to deceive themselves in so material a point. They cannot be ignorant that they possess the property or substance of other people; the clothes they wear, the food they consume, the very houses they inhabit, remind them of their injustice, and yet it is impossible to prevail with them to discharge their duty on this head. Some will tell you, with great gravity and coolness, that they cannot do justice to others, as they are daily wronged by others themselves. This indeed is a strange way of reasoning; because others run headlong to hell, they must follow the example! Will the multitude of transgressors be any excuse for your crimes, or any alleviation to the torments the Almighty has decreed against sin and the sinner, the iniquitous and the unjust? Should you not rather say, because doing so would be squaring your life by the Gospel, "I will wrong no man although I am daily wronged by others, and will walk alone in the paths of righteousness, amidst the general depravity of mankind." Others will tell you they cannot think of making restitution, because it would be attended with ruin to themselves and their families. But let them consider what would become of themselves and their families if their neighbour's substance, or any part thereof, had never fallen into their hands; that of the two it is much more

natural the guilty should suffer, rather than the innocent. What is more, I can assure them that parting generously, and like a Christian, equitably, with what they have no right to, far from impoverishing their families, will be a sure means of making them prosper in the world, by drawing down a blessing from heaven upon all their undertakings. Strange reasoning, my brethren, to refuse making restitution lest you should fall into misery and want ! But know, that this alone is enough to draw down on your guilty heads the very misfortunes you are so apprehensive of. The Holy Ghost tells you as much by the prophet Micheas : "The treasures of iniquity (that is, wealth unlawfully acquired) are an active fire, that consumes and devours everything in the house of the wicked and unjust." By means of those ill-acquired and criminally-kept riches, you may bustle through, and cut a figure in the world, for a time, but be sure the day will come, and shortly come, as the Spirit of Truth declares, when all these riches will be swept away on a sudden, without leaving the least remains behind : like the impetuous torrent formed by a sudden cataract on the mountains, which, rushing violently down the sides, bears away everything in its passage, but in a few moments disappears, leaving dry the channel which before could not contain the deep and rapid torrent. That similitude is taken from the forty-sixth chapter of Ecclesiastes.

In this, as in all other instances, how truly are thy words, O my God, verified ! Cast your eyes about, and behold how many instances of this nature could be produced, were we to consult the annals of time, or even our own short experience in life ! How many fortunes have dwindled away in the short space of a very few years ! The unjust foundations they were raised on, shaken secretly by the hand of God, began to totter when least expected, and soon rushed tumbling to the ground. If then you wish to avoid the like fate, give every man his own—restore whilst restoration or restitution becomes a virtue, and the harbinger of blessings : for honesty, with the slenderest funds, shall open a fairer prospect to prosperity, than heaps of riches grounded on injustice.

Others, in fine, will tell you, that at present they cannot part with what they have, but are sincerely disposed so to settle matters at their death as to do justice to mankind. But this is a manifest illusion of self-love, which will most certainly prove the cause of their entire perdition. The precept of restitution is so obligatory in its nature, and the execution of it cannot, generally speaking, be deferred, without committing

a great sin—for which reason it is agreed on by all divines, that one who defers making restitution when it is in his power to make it, can by no means be absolved or admitted to the sacrament. Deferring restitution aggravates the crime of detention, because it implies the knowledge of an injustice which we refuse to atone for; and we see by the experience of the world, that restitution thus deferred is rendered impracticable. Your intention by delay is, not to inconvenience yourself by an act of justice, but to make it obligatory upon your heirs: but will they perform that act of justice which you yourself refused to do? Your heirs may perhaps inherit your vices, as well as means—if so, think you, will they be more heroically virtuous than you, to let go that grip of your neighbour's means which you wickedly held whilst alive? Your salvation is too momentous to let it hang by such cobweb reasoning; your salvation demands of you that act when living, which, when dead, may be neglected or forgotten. Suppose your heirs to entail the same obligation on their successors; thus the injustice is handed down from father to son, and yet the reparation is never made. Will God hold you guiltless for thus sporting with his holy laws? No: your honest views, your sincere intentions, will not excuse you. You should know, by examining your own heart, which every Christian is bound to do, and judging of others, by your own vicious propensities, that a strong attachment to riches is a vice so general, that very few are willing to give up what they are possessed of. If then you refuse to repair an injustice of which you are conscious, when you could and ought to do it, it is a criminal omission that will pursue and condemn you at the judgment seat of God. If, on the last day, God shall condemn to hell-fire such as refuse to give away a part of their lawful, rightful substance to relieve the poor in their necessities, with what vengeance will he treat those that retain what they have no right or title to? At your leisure, and in silence, meditate on this dreadful truth, and it will render you docile to the voice of justice. Having thus shown you how strict and indispensable the obligation of restitution is, grounded on a divine command, and enforced by severe penalties, it remains that we examine who the persons are that are specially bound by this obligation; which will appear in the following part of this discourse.

Second—If it be a general principle, that any one who injures another in his property or reputation is bound to repair the injury, so far as he is able, at the risk of his salva-

tion ; it follows that wide and extensive is the field we are entering on, as no state of life is exempt from numerous and daily wrongs. A master, for instance, makes little of keeping a poor servant for many months, perhaps years, out of his hard-earned wages, and if ever he pays, thinks he has fulfilled all justice. But still he is bound in conscience to repair the loss the poor servant suffered by want of his wages. The money in his industrious hands would have turned to a beneficial account, would have fructified, and the injury here lies at his master's door, which he is bound to repair. The servant, in turn, makes no scruple of neglecting his master's business, embezzling his substance, or suffering it to be embezzled by others, consuming wastefully his provisions, destroying his furniture, and letting all go to ruin ; but let him know, that in the eyes of God he is accountable for whatever perishes through his fault, as he is paid for watching over and taking care of his master's substance. The guilt is incurred, as well by the plunder and neglect of the servant, as by the servant conniving at the plunder made by others, or the want of the necessary vigilance—for all which restitution must be made. Workmen and labourers come also under consideration. You agree with a man, or a set of men, to perform a certain task : whilst the master is present, the work goes on as it ought, but as soon as he turns aside, the work is neglected ; and yet the workmen shall insist upon full payment. But let them understand, that all they receive over and above the just value of the work they performed, is so much stolen, for which restitution must be made. A stranger, innocent, inexperienced, and unacquainted with the value of merchandise, comes into your place for some of the goods you sell : immediately perceiving his ignorance, you take advantage of it, by exacting more than the value or the accustomed price, or foisting on him bad or damaged goods. This you call a lucky hit—but I tell you, it is an injustice for which restitution must be made ; otherwise the justice of God shall seize you, and you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven ! Many, very many there are who use false weights ; mix their liquors, or adulterate their goods, which they sell out afterwards at the price of pure and unmixed goods : but be it known unto them, that as all this is a cheat upon the public, unless restitution be made, they shall account for it at the judgment seat of God.

Others make no difficulty of engrossing and monopolizing by their own private authority, and without any legal commission, all the provisions of a market, in order afterwards to

sell them out, at the most exorbitant rates—but be it known unto them, that as this is a burthen they unjustly throw upon the public, they must make restitution, otherwise they shall never enter the kingdom of heaven. You owe a just debt—and to induce your honest creditor to accept a composition, you trump up a catalogue of real or imaginary losses; or you are indebted to one, whose knowledge or circumstances do not allow him to take a speedy course for the recovery of his right, for which reason you put him off from day to day, from week to week, and employ all the little turns and intricacies of the law to defeat his designs, until at length, taking advantage of his inability, you compel him to accept of an unjust composition! but be it known to you, you are bound to restore all the damages and expenses he sustained, otherwise you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. A tailor seldom fails to take up in a merchant's shop more cloth and appendages than are necessary, for the base purpose of selling the overplus to dishonest workmen or wicked buyers, who afterwards sell out or make up, on their own account, the produce of this dishonest traffic; but know, O ye wise ones in the ways of fraud and vice, that restitution must be made of all you have acquired in this iniquitous way; otherwise you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven. Still more melancholy is the remark that the shopkeeper blushes not to favour these fraudulent practices, by never detecting the villany, which he is always in charity bound to do; and by even becoming partaker of the injustice, in exchanging for the dishonest workman the goods he knows to have been wrongfully taken up—in which case, he is as much bound to restitution as if he gave his goods for money which he saw picked out of his neighbour's pocket. Again, many there are who often raise fortunes by the most unlawful and exorbitant interest. A distressed gentleman, for instance, applies for cash for a bill where he knows cash may be found—but the man of money acknowledges the bill is a good one, but has not the cash at present; if, however, the gentleman buys an elegant horse in his stable for forty guineas (intrinsically worth ten), or a prime hogshead of wine for fifty guineas (intrinsically worth twenty), he will strive to procure him the balance in money. Necessity compelling—the bargain is closed. But the vengeance of God shall pursue that man and his money, unless restitution be made. Like evil birds brooding among the willows, others are seen watching the occasion of grasping the property of the widow and the orphan—some buy at a great undervalue from those whose title is doubtful, and rejoice when the occasion offers of

drawing a considerable interest into their hands, even by crushing or trampling on distress. But let all who act thus comprehend, that without restitution there is no such thing as ever entering the kingdom of heaven. Let those who are charged with the administration of justice, or are employed on references, always hold the balance even in their hands, without inclining to either side from motives of private interest or affection : but if it be necessary to throw a burthen upon both parties, as it often is, let the distribution be made with justice and impartiality, according to circumstances and situation ; if it be not done so, it is a breach of justice, which must be repaired in this life, or eternally punished in the next.

Hitherto I have touched upon some of the direct methods of hurting our neighbour—some of the indirect ways of hurting him now demand your most serious attention, because they subject us no less to the laws of restitution, than to the anger of heaven. Revenge, that corroding malady of the mind, bursts forth like black vapours from a volcano, and vomits calumnies, as unchristian as unfounded, whereby character is destroyed, and all the blessings of social life blasted. In the trading line, many have lost both credit and fortune by one false report. How many young persons have lost decent establishments by one false hint ? Every day we see the most unblemished characters winked down in a female club, or shrugged away by a set of grave, morose, censorious men. Yet the law of God requires those guilty of crimes of this nature, in the first place, to restore their neighbour's character by a public retraction ; and in the second, to repair all the losses, and atone for all the damages they may have suffered by reason of their false aspersions or calumnious insinuations. The laws of charity being violated by trespassing on your neighbour's good name or property, restitution and reparation must be made—palliatives will not excuse you ; though I know it is generally said, that no harm is meant by those loose and unguarded expressions. You who cast a firebrand among your neighbour's goods, whereby conflagration and ruin follow, or who, blindfolded, wield a weapon that deals death and destruction all around, can you set up an excuse of meaning no harm, or if you should, how far will it palliate your crimes for the evil incurred ? Besides, it is well known, that from the corruption of human nature, people are apt to put the worst construction upon everything, and transform the minutest failings into crimes of the blackest dye ; so that, whatever bad consequences arise to your neighbour from your criminal conduct, must be repaired, other-

wise the great God will charge them on the authors, and they will for ever stand between them and the kingdom of heaven.

Another species of knavery, under the false name of dexterity and skill, is sometimes practised by trading people. Envious of your neighbour enlarging his trade and thriving in appearance more than yourself, and resolved to pull him down, or at least to retard his career, you attack him not by open force, but secret treachery—you undermine his credit; you write to his correspondents abroad, to be cautious in sending goods to a man, of whom you have a doubtful opinion. Doubts and apprehensions of course seizing the correspondents, the orders are stopped, the goods withheld—disappointments, decline, and ruin follow. Again, an old trader observes a young man commence a business that has been, perhaps, exclusively in his hands for many years before: but a competitor or a sharer of its profits must not be allowed—and rather than suffer it, he resolves to sacrifice a part of his own property, by selling his goods under prime cost, for the purpose of depriving the young man of all trade, and thereby effecting his ruin. These cases call down the just anger of God—and unless reparation be made, will for ever exclude from the kingdom of heaven. Sometimes little pains are taken to conceal those wicked designs, which break forth in open declarations that such a one is an unfair trader, his goods damaged, adulterated, or inferior to your own; but know, thou wise and cunning worldling, compensation, atonement, restitution must be made for all damages caused by such conduct, otherwise thou never wilt enter the kingdom of heaven.

So common is injustice grown in our days, that sooner might my powers of strength and utterance fail, than the occasions which subject us to the obligation of restitution. Lest, however, I should trespass too much on that steady attention which you have kindly given me, I shall hasten to a conclusion, most earnestly beseeching you, as you value that glory so dearly purchased for you by Jesus Christ on the cross—as you fear the dreadful torments prepared for sinners, that you fulfil the great duty of restitution—that you repair the damages heretofore caused by your imprudence, and restrain all your senses for the time to come, by the laws of Christ and his Church. For a mess of pottage, do not, like Esau, give up your noble birthright. What you retain in your hands is but a trifle, which never can prosper, and yet this trifle (dreadful is the reflection!) shall deprive you for ever of the kingdom of heaven. Can you reflect thus and not tremble? Suppose by trampling on the laws of justice you become possessed of

this whole world, its honours, riches, and pleasures : suppose you held the possession of these a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand years—the term still is short : death will come with all its terrors ; the soul must go, and the body will follow, to the region of horrors, there to drink the cup of the wrath of God, whilst God is God ! Thus this world shall pass and all its toys ; time and all its passing cheats—but the soul lives, lost to itself, its God, eternity and all ! How long ? Alas ! for ever and ever !

Were those now suffering by the terrible justice of heaven, for neglecting to repair the injustices they committed—were they allowed to return to life, O how exemplary would be their restitution ; but so dead is their hope, so black their despair, that were they possessed of ten thousand worlds, all would they give for one drop of water to cool their tongues. Take warning, then, by their deplorable fate. I charge you, on the part of Almighty God, to restore, without delay, whatever you unjustly possess belonging to others. Make restitution for the damages you have caused ; let nothing stand in competition with your salvation ; take care and avoid all injustice for the future, and behave in your respective stations, as St. Paul desires you, “soberly and honestly.” Masters, attend to your servants—pay them full and fair, and defraud them not of their earnings. Act thus from a principle of justice ; but if you do not, remember there is a master above, who shall weigh you in the scales of the sanctuary—a diamond scale, where “justice without mercy,” shall be the lot of all the unjust. Servants, attend to your master—fulfil the duties for which you are hired ; waste not the time of your employment, or work, in idleness : his property waste not, nor let others waste. Watch as Christ desires you, for this end you are employed ; and the great Master in heaven, who placed you under a temporal master on earth, shall reward or punish you as you deserve ; and “every man according to his works.” In your mutual intercourse with each other, cherish the principle of honesty, which is indispensable to your salvation, and a virtue dear to God, and most beneficial to man. Should you in the streets, in the common highway, meet the property of your neighbour, knowing it not yours, you are bound to seek for, and restore it to the owner. But the principle of this virtue must be carried farther than outward actions ; a bridle must be put on your words ; no more malicious reflections, uncharitable insinuations, fraudulent practices, or unlawful contrivances : our very intentions must be guarded, and corrupt nature restrained in the bud—thus the reign of justice shall com-

mence, by restoring to every man his own. For this end, O Lord ! we beseech thy grace in this life, and thy glory in the next. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

ON PROSPERITY AND ADVERSITY.

John in prison.—MATT., c. xi., v. 2.

HEROD on the throne, and John in prison ; iniquity in triumph, and virtue in distress ; the abettors of wickedness surrounded with every advantage of life, whilst the friends and favourites of heaven labour under the heaviest calamities. Here is an object, my brethren, capable of perplexing and even staggering the most firm and discerning minds. The decrees, however, of Providence are to be revered, even in his most dark and impenetrable proceedings—what the Almighty ordains must be both just and good. Although this single consideration were enough to justify the ways of heaven, yet our blessed Redeemer has been pleased to give us more ample and pleasing lights upon this head in the Gospel : “ Happy they that shall suffer on account of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The world shall rejoice, but ye shall weep and mourn ; but your sorrow shall be turned into everlasting joy.” If worldly joys and comforts be generally the portion of the wicked upon earth, it appears clearly from those words of Jesus Christ, our Lord, that sufferings here below shall be the especial inheritance of the just. This is visibly the appointment of the eternal and unerring wisdom of God. Yet many there are so little acquainted with the great and fundamental principle of religion, as to feel pain, often indignation, on beholding the afflictions of the just—the peace and tranquillity of sinners. Amidst those mysterious dispensations of Providence, their dull minds can hardly distinguish the slenderest vestiges of the bounty or justice of God ; inasmuch as they frequently say within their breasts, “ If the Almighty be just, why doth he suffer the wicked to thrive ? if all-bountiful and good, why doth he not assist and protect the virtuous ? ” With all weak and superficial minds, this, my brethren, is the seeming scandal of religion, and a great obstacle to virtue. To remove this scandal, and justify thy way, O God ! in dispensing prosperity and adversity here below, be mine the important, instructive task ; and thine the glory, O Spirit of Truth ! in furnishing

me with correct ideas and impressive words, that we may all venerate and adore the wisdom of thy judgments and the equity of thy ways. For this purpose, my brethren, I solicit your attention to the consideration of two propositions, important yet simple.

First—That the prosperity of the wicked is one of the greatest punishments the Almighty can inflict ; and the

Second—That the afflictions of the just are among the greatest blessings he can bestow.

First—The Spirit of God warns you, in the words of king David : “Do not envy the happiness of those that prosper in their ways, because they will soon perish, like a blade of grass that withers in the dust.” The very felicity they enjoy is the source and immediate cause of their eternal perdition ; as it first, necessarily gives rise to the greatest immoralities ; and secondly, necessarily obstructs the most essential virtues—such virtues as are absolutely requisite towards attaining the kingdom of heaven.

It is very plain, my brethren, that the prosperity of sinners is the cause of their licentiousness, their intolerable pride, insatiable ambition, flagrant injustices, their impiety, and dissoluteness. Is it not prosperity that feeds and inflames their passions, that supplies them with frequent, or rather continual opportunities of gratifying the most irregular appetites, in open violation of the laws of God ? Is it not prosperity that enables them to transgress every obligation with impunity, and procures them even honour and applause amidst the most base and shameful excesses ? A man whom prosperity has placed in the superior ranks of life, is apt to think himself in reality above the level of his fellow-creatures : the glare of wealth and grandeur dazzles his eyes and obscures his understanding, so that he never views himself but in a false light—a light always advantageous to himself, and disadvantageous to others ; and under these circumstances, it is no way surprising he should cry out, like the publican in the Gospel : “I give thee thanks, O God, that I am not like unto the rest of mankind.” Hence proceed that contempt and disdain which are so very discernible in all persons in elevated stations : scarcely will they look down on their fellow-creatures, as if they were formed themselves of nicer clay, or as if all they pride and glory in were any more, as the royal prophet observes, than ashes and dirt. But are sentiments of this kind, my brethren, consistent with the spirit of Jesus Christ, who hath solemnly declared, that “unless you become like unto little children,” as free from vanity and pride as

they are, and entertain as slender an opinion of yourselves as they constantly do, "you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven?"

The next attendant upon prosperity is ambition—ambition of wealth—of honours. In the prosecution of these sentiments, and the gratification of these passions, how many heinous sins and transgressions necessarily occur! The ambitious man stops at nothing to place himself in the high station to which his vanity aspires. Deceit, calumny, circumvention, depressing the good, supplanting the most deserving, uniting with the most iniquitous and unjust; in a word, the most criminal steps and proceedings are all overlooked the moment they become favourable to his ambitious views. In this situation he necessarily forgets that great injunction which Jesus Christ lays upon all the faithful, in general; "Seek first the kingdom of heaven," seek it before all things, and if you do, the word of Christ is pledged that "all the rest shall be given unto you."

Covetousness, or an insatiable desire of wealth, is the next evil that appears in the train of prosperity. To gratify this passion, what frauds and injustices are daily committed? How many ways and practices are followed, highly criminal in their nature, which avarice glosses over with the specious name of fair and equitable dealing! The most execrable usury is often practised in the eyes of a Christian country, under the criminal disguise of new and ingenious industry. Possessed of these principles, how is it possible for those to fulfil the commands of Jesus Christ, who orders us not to love this world, nor the things of this world; to despise all the perishable wealth of this world, and lay up treasures in the kingdom of heaven, where time consumes not, nor violence takes away—where the moth doth not destroy nor accidents impair?

Were the evils attendant on prosperity, I mean those which prosperity usually gives rise to—were they confined to the catalogue we have just touched upon, it were sufficient to excite the alarm and the terror of every virtuous mind; but the evil stops not here, it extends even to the most unbounded voluptuousness and dissoluteness; for, by means of wealth, nothing is wanting to gratify the passions: and from being constantly gratified, the passions become strong and violent; like a flame which burns the fiercer the more it is fed with fuel. Hence that licentiousness, so very remarkable in people of fortune and opulence, whose study is pleasure, whose pursuits are delights and joys: and to procure this pleasure, those delights and joys, expense is

neither spared, nor opportunities neglected, nor improvement omitted. That day, that hour, not diversified by some new amusement, would be tedious, dull, and heavy ; and where innocent amusement is overlooked, criminal enjoyment is grasped at. But I would ask, my brethren, how is all this consistent with that temperance and sobriety St. Paul requires at our hands ; that abnegation and self-denial Jesus Christ universally enjoins—"If any one will be my disciple, let him deny himself,"—let him refuse himself the gratification of his passions, and all his irregular appetites ?

Seeing, therefore, that the prosperity of this world is the fruitful source of the greatest immoralities, is it a situation to be envied ? Is it not rather a situation to be dreaded and shunned by every man who means to conduct himself by the principles of religion, and thereby attain eternal happiness ? If in this situation a man were at any time mindful of his God, or the duty he owes his God, some room then would remain to hope for his salvation ; but prosperity leads to an entire forgetfulness of God, and the things of God, according to St. Paul : "The terrestrial man has no relish for the things of God." The terrestrial man is he who places his happiness in this world, and finds no comfort but in gratifying his passions and sensual appetites with the criminal and unlawful pleasures of the world. "I became rich," says the prophet Osee, "and found an idol to adore ;" the idol of ambition, the idol of vanity and pleasure. To this idol is sacrificed every thought and desire of eternal happiness ; to this idol are sacrificed the present consolation of a virtuous mind, and the pleasing hopes of future felicity ; to this idol, in a word, is sacrificed every sentiment and affection of the soul ; but among those profane sacrifices at the shrine of wealth—among the evils that prosperity entails, none is more lamentable than the apathy it creates in the soul for the things of God ; that indifference for seeing him in his heavenly kingdom ; or the possession of any heaven but this world and its base and sordid joys. When seldom this idolator in prosperity thinks of God, it is not to pay him the just and humble homage of the mind ; not to acknowledge his supreme power and goodness by filial love and a wilful submission to his divine laws—no ; sentiments of concern only arise, that this life is terminable, and the world also perishable, and that both are not to last for ever. If ever this idolator in prosperity, I say, thinks of God, it is not with the consoling hopes and firm confidence which virtue inspires, of sharing for ever in the glory and happiness of heaven—no ; it is with all the terrors of a guilty mind, and

the liveliest apprehensions of falling a victim to his wrath in the eternal, horrid, devouring flames of hell.

This dreadful situation is the necessary result of the prosperity of this world. Now, I would ask, what degree of happiness is attainable in a situation of this kind? or how far is Divine Providence to be arraigned for not placing those that are destined to the kingdom of heaven in such dangerous situations as must necessarily pervert their minds and corrupt their hearts, and thereby disqualify them for the eternal happiness they were intended for? Is it not rather the greatest blessing that heaven can bestow? We should undoubtedly think so were we governed by the principles of religion; but judging as we do, from the false maxims of the flesh, we generally think the reverse. Even a Christian is frequently seen to repine that Providence does not crown all his undertakings with success, and bestow upon him at least a competent share of the wealth and happiness of this world. Even a Christian is known to take offence that Providence should suffer the most profligate sinners to enjoy the largest shares of the wealth and happiness of this world. Like Job, he says, "Why are the impious suffered to live? Why are they raised above the crowd? Why are they confirmed in the possession of their wealth?" These murmurs of misery, which stole from the lips of a just man, are not becoming a Christian—the questions he should ask are: What is this prosperity in the eyes of God, which creates so much uneasiness in the mind of man—a blessing or a punishment? Does it lead to eternal happiness, or debar us from it? Is it consistent with the execution of the divine law, or scarcely consistent therewith? The proper question to ask is, what is the end of this prosperity? Holy Job answers: "To spend their days in the greatest affluence and delight, and afterwards, in the twinkling of an eye, to be tumbled into hell." "I have seen the sinner raised on high," says the royal prophet, "and placed above the loftiest cedars of Libanus; but in a moment he disappeared: I have sought for him, but could not find the least trace of the place he occupied." Who could enjoy more pleasure in the world than the rich man mentioned in the Gospel? He was blessed with a large fortune; spent his days in feasting and delights; was clothed in the richest attire, and lived, in every shape, as become a man of the highest rank and distinction: what was the end of all his prosperity? "He died, and was buried in hell!" But observe the end of poverty and want, sorrows and sufferings—Lazarus, whose sores the dogs had licked, whose extreme want besought a crumb; he

also died, and was transported by angels into the bosom of Abraham, into the mansions of light, to repose for ever in all the joys and glory of heaven !

As it appears from what has been said, that the prosperity of this world naturally and directly leads to eternal perdition, we should not only consider it in this light, at least for the time to come, but also rejoice in spirit that the Almighty hath been pleased not to place us in such situations as, from their nature, and the many strong temptations attendant upon them, bear an opposition almost insurmountable to eternal salvation. You may, perhaps, inquire, is prosperity inconsistent with eternal happiness? I answer no; for some have sanctified themselves in the greatest elevation of power and opulence of fortune. But these were men who punctually complied with the directions of St. Paul, possessing this world as if they possessed it not, and using the things of this world as if they used them not—who, surrounded with every allurements to pleasure, denied themselves constantly, not only every unlawful gratification, but frequently the most innocent amusements, in order to lower their passions, or copy that self-denial which Jesus Christ hath exemplified in his sacred person—men who seemed to have appetites only to control, passions to subdue, riches to despise or distribute amongst the poor—who, far from enjoying any one of the corrupt advantages of fortune, made themselves a perpetual sacrifice to the Lord, by perpetual austerities, mortifications, and penance.

In these days of immorality and libertinism, of vice and folly, how rare is the Christian of this character, who is surrounded with prosperity and fortune! The weakness and depravity of human nature, the unresisted influence of seducing example, the many strong solicitations to sin which always attend the wealthy and prosperous conditions of life, are reasons why scarce one appears to stem this tide of corruption, where thousands are hurried along in its woe-ending torrent. Convinced of this truth the Pagan philosophers of old have acknowledged it easier to bear up against the heaviest strokes of adversity than curb and moderate the licentious sallies of intemperate desire amidst the affluence of fortune. Wherefore, although it be admitted that prosperity is not utterly inconsistent with salvation, it must be allowed on the other hand, that it is scarcely consistent therewith; and by a necessary consequence, that nothing should appear more dreadful in the eyes of a Christian. Notwithstanding the evils entailed by prosperity, many are heard to say, with the worldling in holy Writ, "Happy the people to whom the

things of this world belong." But, "Ten thousand times more happy the people," says the royal prophet, "who make the Lord their God." For the enemies of the Lord, after being raised to the highest honours, and exalted above the crowd, shall suddenly fall and disappear, like smoke that flies before the wind, and vanishes into the air. If this be the dreadful fate of all those that prosper in this life, had I not a just right to say from the beginning, that the prosperity of sinners is one of the greatest punishments the Almighty can inflict; as, on the other hand, the sufferings of the just are amongst the greatest blessings he can bestow—a truth I shall endeavour to make clear in the second part of this discourse.

Second—That sufferings and affliction are among the greatest blessings Almighty God can confer upon the chosen children of Adam here below, I intend to prove on these grounds, that thereby daily and constant opportunities occur—first, of proving their fidelity and constancy; second, of securing their salvation, by screening them from the most imminent dangers of the world; and third, of increasing, by additional degrees of virtue and godliness, the immortal crowns of glory he reserves for them in the life to come. All these blessings flow as a necessary consequence of that obscurity and affliction wherein the just, under the direction of Divine Providence, are seen to live for the most part upon earth.

It requires little argument to show that tribulation is that point wherein the fidelity and constancy of a just man appear in their brightest colours—such colours as leave no room for doubt or suspicion. It is requisite for the honour and glory of God to manifest unto the world that he is, and will be, served to the end of time by a chosen few, in spirit and truth, notwithstanding the opposing power of temptation, weakness, and seduction. As a scene of this kind must necessarily reflect the greatest honour upon the Divinity, he takes pleasure in displaying it from time to time before the eyes of mankind; and this scene, which honours God, delights his angels, and edifies the world—this scene, I say, is the just man in the deepest affliction. It is easy to serve God in the calm and serene seasons of life, when neither difficulties, nor losses, nor crosses interrupt the agreeable progression of our desire; but to continue faithful under the heavy pressure of bitter calamity—this is the effect of a most lively faith, an animated hope, an unshaken constancy! These virtues, to appear in their brightest lustre, appear in the just man under severe trial: for if under the hardest circumstances a man shall not

depart in the least from the laws of God, there can be no doubt of his faith, his firm hope, or of his obedience and fidelity to God. My meaning is, that a man who remains firm and unshaken amidst the most violent storms of temptation, loves God above all things, and prefers him before all things ; which is the greatest honour the Supreme Being can receive at our hands. To declare publicly at any time for the service of God and the obedience due from his rational creatures, is indeed glorious to the Divinity ; but how far are these declarations to be depended on? Vain, in general, and empty like air, they pass away forgotten and unnoticed. Hence are frequently seen such declarations violated the very instant they are made.

It is not, therefore, such vain and empty declarations of fidelity—declarations that consist barely in words, that honour and glorify the Divinity—no ; but declarations grounded on action, declarations verified by the nicest trials of suffering and tribulation. On these grounds alone Almighty God seems to exult and triumph at the fidelity of a good man, labouring, but never sinking under the heaviest calamities of life. On this occasion observe the proud words of the Lord to the Spirit before his throne : “ Hast thou seen my servant Job ? ” not as formerly, surrounded with honours and all the affluence of fortune, lifting up his righteous hands in thanksgiving to heaven—for bare thanksgiving requires no generous effort of the soul—but stretched upon a heap of mire, a prey to the most acute disorders, abandoned by his friends, destitute of every consolation but that of a virtuous mind, yet religiously submissive under this deluge of misfortunes, and blessing the divine hand that struck him. “ Hast thou seen my servant Job ? ” There is a sight worthy the attention of the whole world, pleasing to heaven, glorious and honourable to the Divinity, since it exhibits the most unquestionable proofs of true and unfeigned virtue.

In this light we should consider every just man amidst his sufferings upon earth : we should look upon him as the chief instrument of the glory of God ; and if any of you, my brethren, have the happiness of being, by tribulation of any kind, suffering members of Jesus Christ, rejoice in spirit ; for while you suffer without departing from your fidelity to God, you certainly glorify him more thereby than you could in any other shape whatsoever ; and in return, Almighty God will hereafter glorify you in heaven. Suffering with a spirit of religion is the martyrdom of the mind—a martyrdom the more glorious as it lasts the longer. Confessing our faith and sealing it with

our blood, is the greatest glory the Divinity can receive at our hands, according to the words of Jesus Christ: "No man can have greater love than he that lays down his life." Next to this comes that perpetual testimony of our faith which results from a long series of sufferings borne with fidelity, patience, and love. Let us no longer admire that divine Providence is constantly pleased to afflict the just, or suffer them to be constantly afflicted by others: in this he seeks and finds the manifestation of his glory—and who is the man that would not deem it a happiness to be instrumental in the manifestation of the glory of God? If Almighty God does not call others to the same trials, it is because they are not worthy of him—the base metal is rejected by the skilful workman, whilst the gold is thrown into the furnace, to be refined and purified until it becomes proper for the curious and elaborate performances of art.

It is not his glory alone that Almighty God has in view in the afflictions of the just, but likewise their own particular interest and advantage, by securing their salvation. This security arises from the absence of temptation—for tribulations, like sentinels, form the lifeguard of the soul, by preserving it in justice and righteousness to the last moment of life. As nothing is more capable of making us forgetful of our duty towards God than the happiness of this world, so nothing can more effectually keep us united to God than the afflictions of this world; because in a situation of this kind we live at a distance from all the temptations attending the high and wealthy conditions of life. "While the just are afflicted, sinners are allowed to prosper," Tertullian says, "that they may serve, like so many fatted victims, to glut the devouring wrath of heaven, and satisfy the unappeasable justice of the Lord, during the unbounded length of eternity." Hard, or even narrow circumstances, preserve us from the criminal abuse of wealth; humiliation, from the extravagance of towering pride; inability, from the unjust and daring projects of ambition; sickness and infirmity, from the excesses of licentiousness and dissoluteness. Draw a just man from the state of obscurity and affliction wherein he glorifies God by his patience, his sufferings, his humility, and resignation, and place him amidst comforts and delights, he will soon forget his Almighty Father, so far as to act in open violation of his holy laws: the incense he constantly directed to the throne of God in his obscurity, will now be directed elsewhere, and offered to some mortal creature he adores.

The unhappy Jews afford a melancholy instance of this

observation, who, after their deliverance from the slavery of Egypt, gave the strongest proofs of their infidelity and obstinacy. "In the very desert, after being fattened with the blessings of God, they murmured aloud, and openly rebelled against heaven and the Lord." This is, my brethren, the great mystery of divine Providence with regard to the afflictions of the just : as the Almighty foresees they would certainly abandon the ways of justice in any other situation, he mercifully keeps them in that state wherein they, by a happy necessity, must remain faithful unto God. At present, I confess, we can hardly conceive these sublime truths from the darkness of our understandings, or the perverseness of our nature ; but in the great day of revelation, when the mysterious ways of Providence shall be unfolded, we shall see the many enormities and excesses we would run into, if the Almighty, mercifully severe, had not prevented it, by continual affliction. Then we shall see, that our perdition had been unavoidable in any other system of Providence than that of affliction ; and upon seeing it, we shall bless the Lord, who, by a wholesome severity, removed us at the greatest distance from sin, and thereby, as it were, led us by the hand in the ways of eternal happiness. But the views of God are not confined to the manifestation of his glory in the sufferings of the righteous upon earth, nor barely to secure their salvation ; he goes further, and allows the just to draw from their sufferings an additional increase to that glory which awaits [them in the kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom of heaven is a reward—"the reward of those," St. Paul says, "that combat and conquer." The more victories we obtain over the enemies of our salvation, the greater rewards we become entitled to. But no man can be crowned that has not conquered, nor conquer that has not fought ; therefore it is necessary, in the ways of Providence, that the just, for whom the rewards of heaven are destined, should be put to frequent and critical trials. Sinners are suffered to live in profound peace ; why so ? because the rewards are not destined for them, nor, consequently, the trials that are necessary for obtaining those rewards. But the just are afflicted, constantly afflicted ; because, as the Spirit of Truth says by the mouth of St. Paul, "Every stone which is to enter into and make up a part of the structure of the heavenly Sion, must be hewn without the city ;" that is, prepared and fitted by affliction upon earth, to occupy a place in the kingdom of heaven. Hence we may justly infer, what the wisdom of the flesh may look upon as a misfortune to the just, is in reality the greatest

blessing heaven can bestow ; every hardship they endure is an addition to the glory that is reserved for them in the kingdom of God ; the more unhappy they are in this life the greater felicity they are to enjoy in the life to come. Nor is the moment of enjoyment deferred to any distance of time : “ a few moments ”—all you, my brethren, who are distressed, afflicted, or oppressed, listen to the words of your Saviour, and let them bring comfort to your souls—“ A few moments, and you shall see me : then I will come, and your hearts shall rejoice ; and your joy shall be full.” At this happy period, the just who had been often insulted upon earth by the sinner, shall ask him : “ Where are now the gods in whom you place your confidence ; where your wealth and prosperity ; your fleeting, empty joys, and short-lived vanities ? Your dreams of happiness are over. Your sun of life is set ; impenetrable darkness surrounds you, and eternal perdition is your lot ; ” whilst inexpressible, interminable felicity succeeds all the afflictions of the just upon earth.

Is not this enough, my brethren, to justify the mysterious ways of Providence with regard to the good and the wicked upon earth ? Doth it not appear, that permitting sinners to thrive and prosper in the world ; never disturbing them amidst their guilty joys ; abandoning them to their passions and the corruption of their own desires ; leaving them in a state of elevation that swells the heart—of splendour that bewilders, and magnificence that dazzles, the mind—of fortune and affluence that excite and gratify the most criminal appetites ; are all strokes of severity and the most rigorous justice that God can exert during this life, as it leads to final impenitence, which ends in everlasting ruin ? On the contrary, doth it not appear, likewise, that trying the fidelity of the just by affliction ; keeping them in a state of justice by removing the strongest incitements to sin ; and giving them frequent opportunities of heaping merits upon merits, and thereby enlarging in a high degree the sphere of their future happiness—are all proofs of the most generous love and unerring wisdom ? You are, therefore, bound humbly to adore the ways of Providence upon earth. Astonishing as they may be, they are the dictates of unerring Truth, incomprehensible Wisdom, unbounded Goodness. If heaven afflicts here, it is either to draw us to repentance, or maintain us in justice to the end. Let us therefore say, with King David ; “ In thee, O Lord, I have hoped, let me never be confounded.” Treat me as thou art pleased in this life, I shall always be resigned to thy holy will. To thee is best known, my Father, my

Redeemer, my God and my All, what is most conducive to my salvation—riches or poverty, elevation or obscurity, health or infirmity, distinction or disgrace; whatever thou shalt decree, that I accept with reverence and submission. I only beg thy grace to comply with thy holy will, that after glorifying thee upon earth, amidst the various tribulations of life, I may at length glorify thee for ever in thy heavenly kingdom. Amen.

SERMON XIV.

ON DEATH.

“If any one will keep my word, he shall not die for ever.”

ST. JOHN, c. viii., v. 51.

WHAT is meant by death in the words of the apostle, is eternal death, or perdition. As for natural death, or the dissolution of our bodies, no man is exempted from it; because, being all sinners, we all must die: for “death,” as St. Paul declares, “is the wages of sin;” and “it is by sin death entered into the world.” Death therefore was a part of the punishment inflicted upon our first parent, for his disobedience to the laws of God in Paradise; and we, by inheritance, become liable to the guilt of that disobedience, and to its punishment—Death. Man, originally formed by God, was a perfect being, intelligent, immortal, and full of wisdom. But these sublime privileges have been in a great measure lost by his transgression. That intelligence which assimilated him to the angels is unknown; his immortality cut short by death: and the wisdom or understanding that dignified and raised him beyond all the works of the creation, is now most miserably darkened and obscured. Of all the evils entailed on mankind by the unhappy fall of Adam, none is so deplorable as death. Death, the punishment of sin, consists of two parts—temporal death, or the separation of the soul and body; eternal death, or the death of the damned: the one is common to all, the other to sinners only.

But it is in our power, as St. Austin ingeniously remarks, to convert this poison into a remedy, and make that which is the privation of mortal life, the very source of everlasting life—How so? Because the consideration of death, as this holy father observes, is, by the most wonderful providence of God, one of the most powerful preservatives against sin, which is the very cause, not only of natural, but also eternal death and perdition. The word death, I know, has a very disagreeable

sound to many of the Christians of our days—but much more disagreeable is a serious consideration of so dreadful a subject. No subject, however, involves greater truths or more awful consequences; none more capable of humbling the pride of man—the fertile source of most of his disorders; and, of course, none more likely to awaken your attention, from the interest you all must necessarily feel in the consideration of a terrible scene, which will come to the lot of each of you individually one day to undergo. The proper consideration of death now, by rooting up the disorders of the soul, may prevent the evils that generally attend it: for, let me ask you, what are the usual and most powerful sources of the perdition of mankind? Are they not the love of this world, and a total neglect of the things of God? Now, the consideration of death destroys, in some measure, the entire influence of these two fruitful principles of evil; because,

First, It naturally disengages our souls from the love of this world; and,

Secondly, It naturally bends our thoughts upon heavenly things.

Thus by dying spiritually to the world, and uniting ourselves to God, we guard against the terrors of a temporal death here, and against the evils of eternal death hereafter.

First—What principally engages the minds and hearts of men, and inspires them with that love of the world, which St. John declares to be inconsistent with the love of God, and consequently with salvation, is, as the apostle says, the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes. The first makes us slaves to our pleasures—the second fills us with strong desires of elevation and riches. The mutual influence and concurrence of these two different passions, never fail to make us quite terrestrial; unless they be carefully repressed and confined within the just bounds of moderation, by the principles of religion, whereof the consideration of death is undoubtedly the most effectual: for here we have the vanity of all the pursuits of life painted in the strongest colours—here we read, in the plainest characters, how great the folly is to place our affections in anything perishable, so as to neglect the solid advantages of everlasting happiness. It is not necessary, I hope, to tell you, that you all must die—this is a truth which needs no proof or confirmation, as daily experience is sufficient to remove any doubt on the subject. Our great ancestors have lived, and they died—generation after generation, like billows on the ocean, have successively followed them, and pointed out

the way we are ourselves shortly to follow, unto the grave. The renowned men of old ; the mighty conquerors of the world, who shook the earth with their power, the Alexanders and Cæsars, have sustained the stroke of death ; because they could not avoid the blow, and passed away like the meanest of their subjects, forsaken by their power, their grandeur, their honours, their wealth, and their friends. O death, how bitter is thy approach to the worldly man and sinner ! And the worldly man and sinner shall feel its blow ; because St. Paul says, "it is decreed that every man shall die : " so that our whole life is no more, properly speaking, than one continual progression towards death. If death, then, be the infallible lot of all ; if the time, the manner, the place, be all wrapt up in mystery ; if it be the door that infallibly leads to happiness or misery ; if it be the gate of eternity ; it behoves you all, my brethren, to dwell frequently on the consideration of death, and to draw therefrom such conclusions as must necessarily tend to the reformation of your lives ; as the Holy Ghost declares : "If you remember your last things you will never sin."

For this purpose let us fancy ourselves for a few moments in one of these awful, silent places, which custom and religion have consecrated to the interment of the dead. Stop at the first grave—behold and examine the scene it exhibits to view. This undecorated, humid sod contains the remains of some humble peasant, who lately lived, as we do ; whose ashes are now trodden under foot by the thoughtless passenger, as ours will shortly be. But behold yonder shrine, the costly monument of conjugal affection or filial piety. The strong and beautiful casements of that venerable pile were surely formed to remove horror from death, and corruption from human nature. Examine farther, and you behold double coffins, with gaudy trappings ; but inside, stench, corruption, a little earth, and some bones. Should you inquire whose remains are those ? If time has spared the monumental inscription, consult the stone, for he is forgotten by the world. And is this the end of all—the exalted and the humble, the great and the small, the rich and the poor, the king and the beggar ? Is this the end of all the pleasures and joys of life ? Yes, and of its sufferings. Is this the end of all the wealth and honours of this life ? Yes, and of its poverty and humiliations. In the grave all ranks meet, all enmities cease, all discontents are forgotten and buried. As we all came one way into the world, so we must all leave it one way, and that is death. Death, then, is that point which, during the existence of

mortality, will always afford the most solid grounds for instruction : for what you have seen the grave exhibit in your view, your grave will, in turn, exhibit to the view and contemplation of future generations.

This consideration alone should be sufficient to remove, or at least lessen the excessive love we all bear ourselves ; because this self-love, which becomes inordinate by excess, is the usual source of most of our disorders and transgressions. Madam or Miss are of so tender a frame, so delicate a complexion, that coarse or ordinary modes of living do not agree with her ; she can neither fast nor abstain, nor practice anything that may approach that abnegation and self-denial which Jesus Christ enjoined on all his followers. The Squire, with his cumbersome load of flesh, can neither put nor keep himself in an humble posture, even in presence of the Lord : he thinks it a great deal, if, during our holy mysteries, he bends the knee at the Elevation alone ; but afterwards he must either sit or stand, lest by an exterior act of humility and reverential respect, he might incommode his unmortified corpulence. But why all this care and attention, this excessive delicacy and anxiety for ease ? Do you consider that the body you are now so fond of, will, notwithstanding all your care and attention, shortly rot, and moulder into dust ? If this be true—and that it is, all nature speaks aloud—is it not the height of folly, and a violation of every principle of reason, to gratify and indulge that body at the expense of your soul ? However great this folly, still it is, by sad experience, seen, that a fatal propensity to indulge this heap of clay, which must shortly fall in pieces, is one of the most prevailing disorders among the Christians of our days. Consult the bills of mortality, and see how many daily meet death by the unlawful gratification of sense, by drunkenness, sensuality, and debauchery. Victims to those pleasures that draw death, with its horrors, in their train, many, alas ! very many have passed away. Take you warning by them. The horrors of death avoid, by avoiding the deceitful pleasures of life, and squaring your lives by a Christian life of mortification. For should pleasure even last through life, the life of man is short —“a vapour that passeth quickly,” as Job says ; and when death comes, you will possess neither sentiment nor capacity for pleasure : then, as David says, “you will have eyes, and see not ; ears, and hear not ; outward sense, but incapable of action.” Death will put an end to all the objects that once proved so pleasing to your minds—amusing shows, harmonious concerts, nice and elegant entertainments, every source of

pleasure, in a word, is to be exhausted and dried up in the grave. Why, then, will you sacrifice the inconceivable, everlasting joys of heaven, which our good God has placed within your reach, for the empty gratification of sense, which perishes in the grave? Begin now, and resolve henceforth to subdue all the unlawful propensities of sense, as you value your salvation; because death approaches fast to you and to me, with sure and speedy steps; and when he comes, as you have seen, his first stroke will be to tear us away from all that is pleasing and comfortable in life; the next is to strip us of all the riches and wealth of this world.

What is meant by the concupiscence of the eyes as laid down by the apostle, is that unsatisfied avarice which reigns so universally in the world—that strong and unbounded thirst after riches which seems to extend to all ranks, to animate and influence every individual. This avarice, or insatiable desire of riches, is “one of the fiery chains” mentioned by St. Jude, whereby numbers of souls are daily dragged down into the bottomless gulf of hell. “Those who have a mind to become rich,” St. Paul says, “never fail to fall into the snares of the devil.” How, then, shall we be able to govern and moderate this headstrong and dangerous impulse of our corrupt nature? By reflecting seriously upon death; by considering, that all the wealth you have purchased with so much anxiety, seek for with so much pains, or that you daily labour for with so much solicitude and care, will soon disappear, and leave you centred in the most deplorable indigence. Examine the situation of the most wealthy man the moment he dies—what becomes of all his opulence, his connexions, his attendants, his domains, lands, and possessions? Caressed, looked up to, and obsequiously obeyed when living—when dead he is forsaken by all. Not surely by his wife, his children? By all, alas! forsaken and loathed—hurried off into the grave, this man of wealth, of lands, and domains, possesses now no more than six feet of earth—the possessions lent him by the Lord, which he thought his own, are now passed into other hands, and the cold, comfortless coffin is his only possession. “His dwelling,” holy Job says, “is now the grave; his friends, corruption; his attendants, the worms; and his inheritance, a small, a very small portion of cold, uncomfortable clay.”

O cruel death! is it thus you deprive us of all we possess? Is it thus you treat this honourable man, who, by amassing great wealth in the East or West Indies, in the remote regions of the earth, acquires rank and reposes under his fig-tree with luxurious ease? It is—for bend he must under the stroke of

death, and forsake all the blooming fruits of his labours; because, "as he came naked into the world, so he has gone out of the world naked and destitute of all things," St. Paul says. No, it is not so: his sins accompany him. The sins he committed by too great an attachment to the riches of this world; the sins he committed by the unfair, dishonest, and fraudulent steps he took to procure or increase those riches; the sins he committed in defrauding the poor of the share they were entitled to in the riches he had acquired; all these sins have followed him from his death-bed to the judgment-seat of God, and from the judgment-seat of God to the deep abyss of hell! "The rich man died," says Jesus Christ in the Gospel, "and the moment he died was buried in hell—but Lazarus, who had lived in the greatest misery and want, was transported the moment he died into the bosom of Abraham:" that is, into a place of eternal rest and felicity. What, then, thou worldly and unsatisfied man, what art thou labouring for? For riches, which must shortly, perhaps in a few minutes, pass away from thy hands? For riches, which, in all appearance, will bring about thy eternal ruin, as they did to Dives? "Fool that thou art," says Christ our Lord, "to whom will those riches belong?" For whom art thou amassing? for a family? A decent provision is commendable; too much is censurable; anxiety is criminal. But where no family calls, where nature has but slender ties, how great the folly of all irregular attachment to the wealth and pomp of life! Because this very night, perhaps, thou art to die. This very night, perhaps, thou art to be brought to an account for thy soul, and still thou dost dream by day, as well as by night, of nothing but riches, which death shall shortly strip thee of. Was ever folly greater, (and yet the folly is daily ^{seen}), than this anxiety, this desire, this attachment to riches! Henceforward begin, by disengaging your hearts from all inordinate attachment to, and by a Christian use of the riches committed to your care, "to lay up treasures in heaven," as our Saviour desires you, which nothing shall deprive you of; "such treasures as no insect can corrode, no rust consume, nor any length of time reduce into dust." What death will shortly do, without any merit to yourselves, do you now, by which you will produce an eternal weight of glory hereafter. Disengage your hearts from the riches of life. Make the proper use of them—first, by attending to domestic necessities—and, secondly, by attending to the necessities of the poor. Cover the naked, relieve the oppressed, cheer the heart-broken, give food to the hungry.

Remove sorrow from the bed of woe by your timely visit, and gladden the dreary hamlet by seasonable aid. The young ones shall lift up their innocent hands to bless you; and the invocations of feeble infirmity shall pierce the heavens, and draw down its choicest blessing on your heads. Disengage your hearts, I say, from the attachment to the riches of life; because they are not only perishable and of short continuance, but likewise because they are the usual sources of eternal perdition. The day will come when what we are now considering in speculation will come to pass in reality. Unless the vengeance of God should seize you by a sudden death, the day will shortly come when you will be told: "You would do well to settle your affairs, as the end of your life is approaching."

What awful sentiments will not then fill you at that dreadful hour; what grief and anxiety; how disturbed and agitated the soul! Then you will believe and feel what I now tell you, that you shall be for ever separated from everything you held most valuable upon earth—husband, wife, family, friends, possessions—all, all must pass away like a dream! What support or consolation will the world or its riches afford the sinner on the approach of death? What reflections occupy the mind from past joys or future prospects? All the joys of life appear clearly to him what the wisest of men truly called them—"vanity of vanities;" and terror seizes him on looking towards the other life—for there he beholds an angry, a just, and inexorable God, prepared to take revenge for the multiplied sins of a long life—against him heaven is closed, and hell opens under him with its eternity of torments! Reason, then, as well as religion, require of you to consider death now, as the sinner shall on his death-bed. By thus learning to die, you will disengage your hearts from all inordinate attachment to this perishable, deceitful world. Then you will learn "to use this world," as St. Paul styles it, "as if you used it not," because you will plainly see that "this whole world is no more," as the same apostle says, "than a figure which passeth away." Besides this great advantage arising from the consideration of death, another of no less consequence presents itself to our consideration, as thereby our thoughts are naturally bent upon heavenly things, as will be laid before you in the following part of this discourse.

Second—It is not enough to disengage our hearts and wean our affections from the pleasures and riches of this life, because philosophy alone may lead so far; as you see from history, where the sages of antiquity divested themselves of

all they possessed, in order to deliver themselves from all the solitudes and cares of this world, and enjoy tranquillity and peace of mind—something more is requisite in a Christian. He is not only bound to make the possession of riches, which give him a command of the pleasures of this life, instrumental to his salvation by denying himself of these and using those, as I have already spoken of—he is moreover bound to look on this world with indifference, as having no permanent dwelling therein, and to level all his endeavours at the kingdom of heaven, as being the place of his destination, the end of his mortal course, and which consequently should be the only, at least the principal object of all his thoughts. The consideration of death most effectually inspires a resolution of this kind : because on death depends eternal happiness or misery. If we die well, our happiness is secured for ever ; if we die ill, misery for ever follows. The moment we die, that moment we are brought to the tribunal of God, according to St. Paul —“After death, judgment ;” and according to the sentence then pronounced, our lot is decided for ever and ever.

This awful sentence is what makes death so terrible to every thinking man. Not the loss of life, not the privation of the pleasures or the riches of life, that shakes the souls and fills them with dreadful apprehensions. No ; were the stroke confined to these alone, thousands of persons would be resolute enough to look death sternly in the face, smile at its approach, and triumph in the agony. But what makes death terrible to the most resolute is the consequence that immediately follows the decision of our fate during the immeasurable length of eternity. O eternity ! whose boundaries nor man nor angel can calculate nor comprehend. Eternity ! thou awful, dreadful sound ; thou art united to death as the shadow to the substance ! In this light should death be considered. But from a fatal insensibility we possess, few take the trouble of viewing death in the strong connexion it has with our eternal happiness or misery. Do not most people look on it as heathens do, merely as the end of time, the last period of mortal life ? But look you, my brethren, a little farther ; stretch your thoughts and reflections one step beyond the grave, and seriously consider the situation of a man the moment he expires, with regard to eternity. The man of wealth and distinction is seized by a mortal distemper which baffles all aid, and death approaches fast. Occupied with the cares of wealth, for wealth engenders care, he had but little leisure to look towards the grave, or reflect when his ashes lay there where his immortal soul would lie. His disorder now grows violent—

dissolution advances. The whole house in an uproar—consternation in every countenance: a wife in tears; children in affliction; and the last moment of life expected by all with trouble and concern. The great debt of life at length is paid, and death has seized his prey. Amidst this shock of nature, what occurs to me, and should to every Christian mind, is to ask, with holy Job: “What is become of him after death?” Stretched and decorated lies the body before our eyes, but where is the soul? In heaven or ——? Did he die in favour or disgrace with heaven?—a mystery; and as such concealed from human knowledge; thou, O my God! thou alone knowest. The funeral pomp is prepared. Distinguished friends are called on to pay the last sad debt to the deceased; crowds of people attend; and the bier is borne in silent solemnity to the grave. The ministers of Christ assemble to put up their supplications to heaven, and implore Almighty God to look down upon him in his infinite mercy. Nothing, in short, is omitted that decency and religion prescribe. But where is the soul all this time? Has he died in the arms of his Redeemer, or under the empire of Satan—entitled to the joys of heaven above, or the torments of hell below? One thing is certain, that he was judged the moment he died, and his fate in consequence determined for eternal happiness or everlasting misery so long as God is God!

What has happened to him under the justice of God, for you it is not necessary to know; but extremely necessary it is to reflect, that what has happened to him, with regard to the circumstance of death, and with regard to the uncertain, dreadful events that will immediately follow, must shortly come home to every one of you individually to undergo. You all must die, and the sentence of mercy or eternal reprobation will instantly follow. You know not, nor can you know, when this shall come to pass: whether soon or late; in a year, month, day, hour, or the next moment; at rest or in action; in health or sickness; in grace or sin. You know that die you must, and the moment after shall decide your lot for eternity. Eternity! what terrors encompass thee on every side! Every motive that can arise from religion or reason loudly call on us now to prepare for that great, critical, and tremendous moment of death, since our eternal happiness or misery depends thereon! This preparation consists in leading a just, good, and Christian life; because people generally die as they live—those that lead the life of sinners, commonly die the death of sinners; and those who lead a just and virtuous life, commonly die the death of the just and virtuous. The

Spirit of God says so, in clear terms, in the Book of Wisdom: "It shall be well with the man that fears God at the last hour; and he shall be blessed in his death." Again: "Woe be unto you that have abandoned the law of God; when you die, your inheritance shall be the greatest malediction."

I do admit that Almighty God may, and sometimes does, rescue the greatest sinners from the very claws of death, and puts them in possession of eternal happiness, in order to display the inexhaustible riches of his power and mercy; but these are extraordinary strokes of a most signal Providence, miracles of grace, as divines say, which are not to be hoped for or depended on. As in the course of nature the constant vicissitude of seasons, and the harmony of the component parts of matter, beautifully display the regular progression of consequence from cause; so, likewise, in the course of Divine Providence with regard to the salvation of man, is constantly and invariably seen a regular progression from a good life to a happy death—the good liver generally dying in the embraces of the Lord; the bad liver, on the other hand, under the empire of sin. If, therefore, you mean sincerely to finish your days in peace with God; if you value that reward which is prepared for you above, which certainly is valuable beyond comparison, beyond comprehension, you must spend your days in the service of God—and if you have led a wicked life hitherto, if drunkenness, or cursing, or lewdness, or robbery—if any of those crimes which disgrace human nature, raise doubts of forgiveness in your way, repel this attack of your infernal enemy; call upon Christ, and Christ will hear you; call upon him with sorrow for your past sins, and the blood he spilled on Calvary shall blot them out; but call immediately—this day, this hour; lest death may seize you. Return to the ways of virtue and godliness, which Jesus Christ hath pointed out as the only road to eternal happiness: whoever treads in any other most certainly follows the path that leads to eternal perdition.

Although it is generally true that a good life is the sure forerunner of a happy death, yet it is advisable to prepare for that death by specifically appropriating certain seasons in the year—one day, for instance, in every month, to think seriously of our death, and put ourselves in the posture of mind we would willingly die and appear in before Almighty God. On such occasions, should you fancy yourselves stretched upon your deathbed, attended by your ghostly father, surrounded by your mourning friends, on the point of breathing

your last, and appearing before the Judge of the living and the dead, ask yourselves, then, these important questions : "What now weighs heaviest on my conscience? Were I to die this moment, does my conscience suggest nothing capable of debarring me from heaven, and driving me to hell? Could I appear with any safety before the dreadful God of terror, in the situation I am now in? Considering the principles I have adopted, the practices I have pursued, the friendships I have entertained, the society I have frequented—considering, in a word, all the iniquity I have committed, it is plain no chance of life, but eternal death, must be my lot, were I now called off. The many doubts, besides, which heretofore I have passed by, in the varied course of life, strike me now with dread—circumvention, deception, extortion, and imposition, have marked my dealings; the cursed thirst of gain has induced me to buy a valuable consideration for half value, by taking advantage of my neighbour's distress; strict justice has not been my leading principle; where doubts occurred, I trampled on doubts; I stifled conscience on false principles, erroneous grounds: will that now excuse me?" No, certainly: as all divines agree that an erroneous conscience, that is, a conscience formed on erroneous principles, principles entertained and fomented by the passions, does not excuse from sin those who follow its directions, it follows, in cases like this, that every man should carefully examine whether, at the hour of death, he will not scruple any of those things. The most intelligent pastors of the church, those whom God has appointed your instructors, should be consulted in all cases of doubt, whether these practices are sinful in themselves; whether they should not be scrupled, and not only scrupled, but for ever laid aside. Did people act in this manner; did they once a month seriously reflect on death as I have pointed out; did they clear up every doubt, examine every difficulty relating to their conduct; in a word, did they establish themselves in the principles and dispositions they would willingly die in, what a change in morals and conduct must necessarily ensue! How many oppressive bargains would be rescinded, necessary restitutions made, exorbitant charges reduced and brought down to the standard of justice and equity! How many fraudulent and dishonest practices would be laid aside, erroneous and sinful principles changed and rectified! But because people seldom think on death until death comes, every arrangement of conscience is put off to the last hour: the recollection then of a long life of iniquity is such as to render it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to remove; wherefore they seldom

fail to die as they lived—guilty transgressors of the law, in disgrace with God, and victims to his anger.

The difficulty of clearing up, at the hour of death, the conscience of one who has lived twenty, thirty, forty years in the world, according to the maxims of the world, is great indeed. Then it frequently appears that many injustices are to be repaired, many wrongs redressed, many malignant insinuations recalled, and many calumnies retracted, which before were scarce thought of. To a knowing and skilful clergyman then it appears that all his past confessions and communions were so many sacrileges; either for want of due preparation, sincere compunction, or an effectual resolution of amendment: for all sound divines agree that where the habit of sin is continued after many repeated confessions, there could be no real sorrow, no real purpose, no effectual resolution of amendment, and by consequence, that every confession and communion became a horrid profanation of the body and blood of Christ! Nevertheless, it is absolutely necessary to repair all this at the last hour. But how is it possible to do all this in a few moments, when the dying person is oppressed with the weight and malignity of his disorder, distracted by the sorrows of those who surround him, terrified at the approach of eternity, and driven almost to desperation from the consciousness of his guilt and the impending judgments of the Lord? Difficult, I acknowledge, it is; but the mighty hand of the Lord may and can accomplish it. The greatness of the difficulty clearly points out the necessity of preparing for death in the full possession of health and reason. Lead the life of true servants of Jesus Christ. Repair, by your future conduct, the scandals of your past life. Do now what you would wish to have done when death approaches. Life is short: I exhort you therefore most earnestly, in the words of Jesus Christ: "Be always on the watch, because you know not the day nor the hour." Every morning reflect that perhaps this day may be your last; that this day your death-sickness may attack you, or sudden death may seize you, or some disaster may befall you, when no longer time for repentance will be given. Regulate, therefore, every single action of your lives as if it were to be the last. Renew the same thoughts when night comes on; for remember, the long night of eternity is fast approaching—remember the morning is near at hand when you will not see the evening; or the evening will soon come when you will not see the morning. Almighty Father of the morning and of the evening, the Sovereign Creator of all things visible and invisible, the mighty Cause and great Upholder! graciously

grant, that when death shall finish the period thou hast allotted unto each of us—when the term of our mortal existence shall close, the bright day of immortality and joy may open before us, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SERMON XV.

ON PRAYER.

“In every prayer and supplication let your petitions be made known unto God.”—PHIL., c. iv., v. 6.

OF all the duties of Christianity none is so often or so strongly enforced as that of prayer. Jesus Christ recommended it in almost every one of his divine instructions, and composed a most sublime form of prayer to engage us to the practice thereof. The apostles, following the footsteps of their divine Master on this head, in all their writings to the primitive Christians appear to have nothing more at heart than to enforce the practice of this duty. “Day and night let your prayers be continual,” say they; and in another place, “Pray without intermission.” Nor were their endeavours useless; for we read in the Acts: “The faithful were persevering in prayer.” No sudden fits of fervour, like airy bubbles on water, which scarce appear when they again disappear: no pharisaical or capricious piety distinguished those Christians; but a constant, steady, discreet, and fervent piety, wherein they persevered, and whereby they attracted the veneration and respect of their very persecutors. Could we but see those happy days revive! Were the spirit of prayer once well established among us, we should shortly be delivered from those abominable vices which, as a torrent, overflow and disfigure the whole face of the Christian world. But, unhappily, scarce do we discover the least faint tracks of this holy exercise. The enemy of man, knowing well the power, and fearing the effects of prayer, contrives too successfully by the pleasures of this world, and by its calamities also, to turn away the heart of man from prayer, and to occupy it wholly by shadows and trifles that pass away. The elevated, basking in ease, as if of their own making, forget by prayer to acknowledge the bountiful hand whence their ease arises; and a fatal blindness banishes from them the obligation of prayer. The great bulk of mankind to whom calamity is familiar, neglect by prayer to soften their calamities, or to venerate or acknowledge the justice and wisdom of that Almighty power who smarts only to soothe, who depresses only to exalt, who punishes but to

glorify. The use of prayer by many has been totally laid aside. Some occasionally pray, but in so indolent and careless a manner that no benefit to them arises from prayer. On the contrary, much mischief follows to those half-Christians, whom, whilst they pretend with their lips to honour the Lord by prayer, the Lord spurns: "I will vomit thee out of my mouth," as he says in the Revelations; because they pray not from the heart, and because lukewarmness and voluntary distraction, if not indolence and inattention, accompany their prayers.

Under circumstances like these, it is not to be admired that little benefit arises from the prayers of most Christians. Why do I say benefit? Positive evil arises therefrom—because the practice of prayer, in the true spirit of Christianity, is all-powerful in effect; because the neglect of prayer, or what is as bad, indolent prayer, is the fertile source of all evils—two propositions of abundant instruction. Of all evils have I said that indolent or neglected prayer is a fertile source? Yes: but in considering this question I pass over the transitory and passing evils of this life, as unworthy notice in the consideration of the solid, substantial goods of eternity. To remove, if possible, such flagrant and pernicious abuses, and to re-establish the use of prayer, so honourable to God and beneficial to man, I shall propose to your consideration—

First—The indispensable obligation of prayer; and

Second—The manner of praying.

First—The great and indispensable obligation of prayer arises from two principles—the sovereignty of God and our own misery. Almighty God, at the same time that he is willing to supply our wants, cannot dispense with the submission due to him by all his creatures; and this submission is offered by prayer, which is not only a homage due unto God, but also a resource against our own weakness.

Independent of the lights of revelation and faith, the innate principles of the law of nature loudly proclaim the great pre-existing Power that made us; and every motive of creation and redemption demand the homage of adoration and praise so justly due to that great power. Now this homage is paid by prayer; and the obligation of prayer is enforced, not only by the law of nature, but by a special command, with a promise annexed to that command—"Ask, and you shall receive;" for if the Almighty had nothing in view but our relief alone, the institution of prayer would have been unnecessary; because his all-piercing eye can see, without any declaration on our parts, the weakness and cor-

ruption of our nature, the strength and fury of our enemies, the many dangers that surround us on every side, our wants and our necessities, which he is always ready to relieve, as he is infinitely good and infinitely bountiful. Nevertheless we see that he commanded prayer. Why so? Undoubtedly for his own honour; as it contains a strong and public testimony of his supreme power and our own dependence; which are implied in the admonition of the Psalmist: "Subject yourself to God, and that by prayer." No supposition can be made wherein man is not dependent on God his Maker, and obliged to acknowledge this dependence.

This truth is supported by the example of Jesus Christ during the entire of his mortal life on earth. Gethsemani, Mount Olivet, and other solitary wilds that abound in Palestine, have often been witnesses to the many hours, and days, and nights, which the Saviour of the world passed in prayer in their dreary and silent shades, pouring forth acts of homage, of reverence, and love to his eternal Father. What motive could induce our blessed Saviour to act in this manner? It could be no want of relief, for, "the plenitude of the Divinity," that "dwelt within him," as St. Paul terms it, made him Master of all the resources of heaven. What, then, could have been his view? Certainly to honour his Father, and show us an example of the submission he requires at our hands. It is not possible for mortals to pay a more perfect worship unto the Deity than by prayer. By prayer we should humble our souls and bodies to the very ground, and sink ourselves into a sort of self-annihilation in the presence of the Lord. His greatness and goodness on the one hand, and our miseries on the other, demand this submission. The princes of the earth never appear more exalted than when their suppliant subjects implore their powerful protection. This is precisely the case in prayer. For in prayer we should not only humble our hearts, but raise our hands to the great Master of the world, and like so many poor, distressed subjects, humbly solicit his relief. Nor is this submission confined to any one description of persons alone. No: it extends to all the ranks and conditions of life. The great and the small, the rich and the poor, the learned and the simple, the monarch on his throne, as well as his lowest subject, must all bend the knee before the Almighty Father of all, and honour his greatness by public acknowledgments of their dependence. By prayer we raise our thoughts to the throne of God: and from the contemplation of his blazing perfections, his power, wisdom, bounty, justice, and beauty, we begin to

magnify his holy name, and invite the whole creation, with the prophet Daniel, to join in celebrating his holy name: "All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord: praise and extol him for ever." By prayer we silently recall the many and inestimable gifts of our God; and by the sense of love they raise and excite within us, repay them back to the Author as much as is possible for a creature to do: "What shall I return to the Lord for all that he hath given unto me?" Prayer, therefore, necessarily implies the most perfect acts of religion, as adoration, praise, and thanksgiving; and since those acts of religion are an indispensable obligation upon man, it follows, as St. Thomas justly concludes, that prayer falls under the same obligation. Lest these motives should fail in making a proper impression on your minds, consider that prayer is not only a homage due unto God, but also a resource against our own weakness.

The external evils to which we are all subject in this life, from the allurements of flesh and blood, the false deceptions of the world and its passing glories, and the seductions of the devil, as well as the internal evils to which our passions subject us, render an application for succour against their united attacks indispensable—and that succour is obtained by prayer. St. Paul assures us, that without the grace of God we cannot make one step towards heaven, nor form one single thought for that end—How is this grace, so absolutely necessary for salvation, to be obtained? By prayer: for Jesus Christ has told you, "Ask, and you shall receive." As no one can be saved, according to St. Austin, without the grace of God, so no one can obtain this saving grace but by prayer. Prayer, therefore, is the resource which Almighty God has put into our hands for completing the great work of our salvation—it is the key that unlocks the treasure of heaven, grounded on the merits of Jesus Christ, who hath made a solemn promise of obtaining for us whatever we should ask his Father in his name: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatever you ask my Father in my name shall be granted you."

The wonderful effects of prayer have appeared in every age. Patience to bear, constancy to persevere, and fortitude to resist all the enemies of your salvation, you shall obtain by prayer. By prayer how often did Moses appease the anger of God, and wrest from his hands the fiery arms of his vengeance. By prayer the prophet Elias opened and shut the heavens at his will; bringing down the fruitful rain to fertilize the earth, or producing sterility for want of it. By

prayer Joshua levelled with the ground the strong walls of Jericho, and stopped the sun in his rapid course. The good thief on the cross, Mary Magdalen, and the publican, bear testimony to the power of prayer. The power of prayer is so incredibly great as to extend to all the emergencies of life. Other means of salvation, even the very sacraments, are limited to certain effects, and only produce particular advantages : but prayer has no bounds or limitation—it takes in everything within its comprehensive reach ; extraordinary aids and graces, as well as the usual assistance of heaven. By prayer all blessings are obtained, even the great gift of final perseverance, which is undoubtedly the greatest blessing God can bestow.

To comprehend clearly this tenet of your religion, you must know that no one, though ever so just and good, can merit by his good works to persevere to the end ; that is, to die in a moment of grace, whereby he has an undoubted title to the kingdom of heaven. Of so great a value is this favour, that Almighty God was pleased to reserve it particularly to himself. But still divines agree with St. Austin, that what we never could pretend to by the merits of our good works, may infallibly be obtained by prayer and supplication. And why I say so is, because Jesus Christ having made no limitation to his promise, it must necessarily include the great gift of final perseverance. Hence you see the necessity of prayer ; not only from the constant aids necessary to support your weakness, and the admirable effects that may be derived therefrom, but also from the obligation of praying, to which we are all bound. This obligation is chiefly set off by the infinite debts we owe the infinite bounty of God, the debts of homage, praise, veneration, and love ; and those debts cannot be paid but by prayer. Prayer is, besides, the channel wherein the blessings of heaven constantly flow ; and without prayer we can never obtain the necessary succours to bring us to life everlasting. From these considerations it plainly appears that prayer should be our most constant, as well as our most pleasing occupation. The hardened sinner, who by daily multiplying sins provokes the Lord to withhold his accustomed succours, has still one resource left open whereby he may draw down the mercies of the Lord, and that resource is prayer—the hardened sinner, St. Austin observes, has not sufficient strength to forsake his iniquities, rise above his passions, and fulfil those points of the law which require some difficulty, such as the sublime precept of the love of God ; but he can pray, and by prayer obtain the power to do all

this. If the just are bound to pray, in order to persevere in the ways of justice, how much more sinners, that they may depart from their evil ways? Are you subject to violent passions? Pray that the Lord may enable you to overrule them. If assailed by strong temptations, prayer shall overcome them. No difficulty, no evil can resist the power of prayer. And yet prayer, so powerful and universal in effect, and so indispensable a duty among Christians, appears totally neglected in those days by vast numbers of people who pretend to be disciples of Christ, and expect to obtain life eternal without labouring, or even calling for it by prayer, not only, I say, for whole days and nights, but for whole weeks and months.

Soon as the merchant, or tradesman, or farmer, awakes in the morning, business fills his head. The protecting hand of heaven, that raised him from a species of death and called him to new life, is forgotten; and gratitude, then so peculiarly owing, is superseded by business. Business still growing with the growing day, neither the prayer of homage, nor the prayer of love, nor the prayer of request, is thought of; neither heaven nor hell is thought of. To this man of business, life seems only given to make a fortune. The God that created him is forgotten; the God that protects, and still spares him in mercy, is forgotten; that God who heaps blessings and favours on him, which he foolishly imagines the effect of his own sagacity and industry, is forgotten. In the meantime, this man of business forgets not at regular periods to go to regular meals; to eat when hungry; to drink when thirsty; and to look on himself as the provider of that meat and drink which the invisible hand of God alone provides. To business again this man of business proceeds from his meals, or to walks or diversions. But the day of tribulation is at hand, when "he shall call on me, and I will not hear him."

Thus life rolls on with the greater part of mankind, and the indispensable obligation of prayer is passed over. The various trifles of this world are pursued with such eagerness and fire by the thoughtless heart of man, that prayer, the source of all blessings, is forgotten. The business of this life seems to lay aside the affairs of the next; and a mortal blindness to your true interests, and a depravity in the ways of sin, seems, by a just judgment of the Almighty, to be a punishment for the abuse or the neglect of prayer. This uneasiness and solicitude which I feel, my dear brethren, for your salvation, would be entirely removed, if you laboured for the solid, substantial good things of the next life, as you do for the perishable, passing things of this life; if you devoted to prayer

and other Christian works, each day, some reasonable time, which you unreasonably waste in something more criminal than your respective avocations. A weight of business, far from being a lawful excuse, is the strongest motive you can allege for prayer. The more you are plunged in the cares and solitudes of life—the more you are exposed to fall and commit sin, consequently the more you stand in need of an extraordinary assistance from heaven. Now the assistance cannot be obtained but by prayer. David, the illustrious king of Israel, found means to pray seven times a day, amidst the tumult of the most important affairs, the expeditions of the war, and the administration of justice: “Seven times a day have I prayed to thee, O Lord.” Cannot you, then, find time to pray every morning and every evening? What will those affairs avail you before the tribunal of God which now occupy the head, engage the heart, and fill up your whole time? One good prayer will be of greater service to you than a whole life of tumult and noise. Not one of the great affairs of life can accompany you beyond the grave, but all-powerful prayer can obtain the grace of God, and the glory of heaven. Prayer to obtain such blessings must be accompanied by certain conditions, which I come now to treat of.

Second—To pray is not sufficient; we must “pray in the Holy Ghost,” as Paul directs: that is, we must pray in the spirit of religion, or in other words, with humility, attention, and confidence in the name and through the merits of Christ, which prepares the mind, and regulates the object, and the very form of prayer. Instead of these necessary conditions, our prayers are generally attended by three essential defects, as is beautifully laid down by the great St. Austin, who always casts a light before on every subject I treat of: we pray, says he, either from an actual attachment to sin—“*mali petimus*,” or for things which have a close connection with sin—“*mala petimus*,” or in a manner which is sinful in itself—“*male petimus*.” To render our prayers, therefore, effectual, we must take care and pray with an actual abhorrence to sin; to pray for such things as are proper to remove and preserve us from sin; to pray in such a manner as can admit of no sin—important considerations well deserving your most steady attention.

The first essential requisite for prayer is, to prepare the soul by an actual detestation of sin—because sin and the sinner being equally hateful to the God of all purity and sanctity, he can neither listen to nor grant the petitions of those who

approach him covered with the filth of (I mean attachment to) their iniquities. The royal prophet says: "The Lord is far from the wicked," far from listening to or granting what they solicit. "I will not hear your prayers," says the Lord, "although you repeat them over and over, because your hands are full of rapine and blood." If, therefore, you wish to derive benefit from prayer, be sure to observe that important rule laid down by all the great masters of a spiritual life, to begin prayer by detesting your sins—desiring at least to detest and forsake them—otherwise your prayers will most certainly be rejected. For in common reason can you suppose the Almighty will treat you as a friend whilst you profess yourself his enemy? or crown you with blessings whilst you offend him by your crimes? The secret cause of the ill-success attending the prayers of the generality of Christians arises from the careless and criminal commencement of prayer. It is not enough to bend the knee before the universal Parent of all, in order to draw down his favours; you must first show yourselves worthy by renouncing sin, and then he, whose bounty provides food for the beasts of the field, whose sun shines, and whose rain falls, as equally on the sinner as on the just—he, I say, shall not only stoop down to hear when you pray, but his providence shall overshadow and protect you. This preparation to prayer, by renouncing sin, scatters that "dark cloud" which, the royal prophet says, "obstructs the kind influence of heaven." But whilst the attachment to sin remains, prayer, like foul vapours arising from a foul sink, cannot ascend to the pure presence of the Lord, unless to arm his vengeance. So sensible was holy David of this truth, that he always made it his first care to disengage his heart from all immoral affections, before he would presume to address the Lord in prayer. If you wish to pray with success, follow his example. Before you present yourselves at the throne of mercy, be sure to detest and renounce your sins in the sincerity of your hearts. Having thus formed the intention, or rather the commencement, the object of prayer next comes under consideration.

Prayer, in the strictest of language, is but petition—and should be confined to such objects as are consistent with the dignity of God to grant, and man to request. Jesus Christ has pointed out the great and chief object of prayer—"Seek first the kingdom of heaven;" because the goods or evils of this life, being passing and transitory, which he wisely dispenses among mortals merely as means to lead them towards heaven; in his eternal mind those things that pass away with

time, are not the great objects of prayer, but those spiritual blessings which emanate from and finally lead to himself. Possessing in himself the plenitude of happiness, which he desires to share with you for ever, vile and contemptible is everything that leads not towards the plenitude of happiness. What the Almighty esteems, that he would have you esteem and sue for—his grace and his glory. But how blindly do we behave ! We slight these heavenly objects, and thirst after stench and putrefaction, as the Scripture calls it. What we solicit with much fervour are a few worldly advantages, which possess no real good, and often cause our eternal ruin. Ask the ambitious man, if he prays at all, what he prays for with the most fervent desires ? This post of honour, that post of fame ; this dignity, that distinction ; this employment, or that reversion. The extensive merchant and successful trader, how do they pray ? For safe voyages, good sales, hungry markets where their goods arrive, quick returns, and downfall to their competitors. This young and distinguished female, instead of protection from the powerful hand of God against the rude and pestilential blasts of life, prays to be noticed and applauded. If you suffer from the secret judgments of the Lord—if the affliction of sickness or indigence be insupportable—in pain and poverty, call on the Lord for relief, and the prayer is lawful ; but then call for relief from pain and poverty alone. With low terrestrial views, unworthy a Christian, how is it possible our prayers should be heard, or that the Almighty could attend to supplications so unworthy of him ? If Jesus Christ promised to make our prayers acceptable to his Father, that promise relates to such prayers only as should be offered up according to his will, and no others ; for St. John declares : “If you ask anything according to his will, he will give it to you.”

Now, let me ask, if praying as we generally do, for things quite contrary, or at least very dangerous to our salvation, be praying according to the will of Christ ? No ; to pray according to the will of Christ is to pray for the remission of our sins and our improvement in virtue ; to pray for the graces necessary to overcome our temptations, subdue our passions, mortify our appetites, discharge and fulfil every duty of a Christian to the very last moment of our lives. But is it never lawful to pray for temporal advantages ? For those that concern the immediate support of life, such as food and raiment, we may very lawfully request and expect them, as appears from the Lord's prayer—“Give us this day our daily bread ;” as for all other advantages, you should never call for them, but on

condition they be not prejudicial to the interests of your soul ; and even then they should be the very last object of your care, and sued for without any solicitude or anxiety whatsoever. When you call for temporal blessings, says St. Austin, commit the whole issue unto the Lord, that he may grant or refuse them as he thinks proper. Say with that great saint, "Are you not my Father, O my God ? What more shall I say, what more shall I desire ? Are you not my Father, O my God ?" A short and submissive prayer of this kind contains more in a few words than the most prolix orations. Without seeming to request anything, you in reality request everything that a Christian should call for—namely, those things which his paternal providence sees necessary for your progress through life, and also conducive to your eternal happiness hereafter. It is not enough that you prepare and regulate the object of prayer, it is moreover, indispensable that you pray in a manner agreeable to God—with humility and attention, in the name and through the merits of Christ.

Humility is a necessary indispensable attendant on prayer, and prayer necessarily inspires humility. A strong impressive sense of our wants and unworthiness, of the many evils that surround such poor miserable creatures as we are, in want of every real good, beset with dangers, unable to relieve ourselves or even to call for relief, is a strong motive to call forth that humility which should always accompany prayer. At prayer we present ourselves as supplicants before the Great Master of the universe, who has it in his power to grant or refuse what we request ; but he never refuses those who think themselves unworthy of what they demand, as the Holy Ghost assures us—"The prayers of the humble pierce the heavens, and force away the consent of God." The woman of Canaan who forced the Lord Jesus to grant her petition, is a remarkable instance of this—she begs, she intreats, she solicits, but in vain, for our Saviour rejects her petition—"It is not good to take away the bread from the children and throw it to the dogs." Hereupon, humbling herself profoundly, and not dismayed by the repulse, she replies : "I confess, Lord, the comparison is just ; but still the vilest animals receive some scraps to feed upon from their master's table : let me, then, be treated in like manner." All-eloquent irresistible humility overcomes the Lord Jesus : he not only grants her request, but applauds her most highly—"O woman ; thy faith is great ; let thy will be fulfilled."

This is indeed praying in the true spirit of religion, and with a sure prospect of success. But is this the usual mode of praying among many of our modern Christians ? Observe them

entering the Church of God at the awful time of sacrifice—do they assume the posture of supplicants? Do they pray even in appearance? Do they show the necessary exterior marks of veneration, arising from hearts impressed with profound awe and homage for the great ETERNAL BEING present? No such thing—the eye seeks and the hand grapples some chair or easy seat, where, lounging lazily, they saunter away a long, tedious half hour, yawning, and stretching, and staring, but not striking their breasts with humility, and calling on God to have mercy on them. Moses, that favourite of heaven, that prodigy of perfection, the familiar friend of God, could never think of addressing the Divinity without trembling. “Although I am but dust and ashes,” says Abraham, “I will speak to my Lord.” And we, miserable sinners, full of faults and frailties, covered with crimes and weakness, oppressed with sin and guilt, very far, indeed, from the innocence of Moses or the holiness of Abraham, are yet so daring as to rush into the Almighty’s presence unmindful of our miseries or the lowness of our condition! A Christian, sensible of his duty and resolved to fulfil it, behaves otherwise. Before and at prayer his thoughts being occupied on his own unworthiness, his air is composed, his eyes dejected, and his soul penetrated with the reverence due to the Divinity he adores. This man prays as he should pray, with humility—he must also pray with attention.

Attention at prayer consists of three characters—the first in attending to and repeating distinctly every word of the prayers you pronounce; the second, which is more perfect by much, in considering and dwelling upon the meaning of every word, in order to extract and feed upon the spirit they contain; the third, which is the most perfect of these characters, consists in uniting your hearts and affections to the various sentiments that occur in your prayers. These gradations may be adopted where human weakness is great. This method is not only easy in practice, but so excellent in its nature, that in a very short time it has grounded a great many most solidly in virtue. How many beautiful sentiments of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, contrition, and the love of God, abound in the Lord’s Prayer, the Penitential Psalms, and the different offices of the Church, which are of little or no merit for want of the application of the mind and the fervency of the heart!

If a careless, indolent, and neglectful manner of praying be the reproach of many of those who are specially devoted to the service of the Almighty, how much more justly and

forcibly does it not apply to multitudes of those who call themselves Catholics, and to many who are reckoned good Christians? The generality of Christians are deficient in that necessary attention which is essential to prayer, by suffering their fancies to run astray and dwell upon every image and whim of the mind. They seem at prayer to be taken up with the Lord, and treating about the most important concerns of their souls; but in reality their thoughts are occupied either on their domestic affairs, the business they are about engaging in, the idle amusements of the foregoing, or the projected sports of the present day. Now, my brethren, can this be called praying? Is it not rather, as St. Bernard observes, an egregious affront upon the dignity of the Lord, to pray him to give attention to your petitions, whilst you are neither attentive to him nor to yourselves? Without attention, vain and unprofitable is prayer—inattention incurs guilt. Should a slave, in the affairs of life, address his prince on some weighty affair, and, instead of following up his request by a steady and meek attention, should turn aside to amuse himself with toys and trifles, could it be supposed either that he was serious in his request, or that his prince could grant it after such marked contempt? Even so shall prayer, with a rambling attention, succeed. What follows, then? How are you to behave when you set about prayer?—Follow the directions of Jesus Christ: retire to some private place; shut up your mind and senses to all outward objects, and when you do this you will be in retirement although in the midst of an assembly, then pour forth your souls in the presence of the Lord; and if at any time weakness should betray you into any voluntary distraction, take care, the moment you perceive it, to recall your wandering thoughts, and fix them on the holy exercise of prayer: then shall your prayers mount up before the throne of God, and be received by him in the odour of sweetness. Persevere also in prayer. The benefits arising from perseverance may be seen by observing the common course of civil society. But Jesus Christ directs assiduity and perseverance in prayer, not only by his divine words, but many examples in the holy Scriptures.

Remember this, you who are praying this long time past, and, as you imagine, without any benefit; you who grow wearied by prayer if it extends beyond a few minutes; you who abandon prayer soon as the least temptation, the least distraction arises. “How is it possible to be constantly calling for a favour which is constantly refused?” The great St. Austin answers the question: “You are mistaken; God refuses

it not, he only defers it." Hold out a little longer, persevere, apply, call out, and you will certainly obtain what you have been long praying for. If the Almighty should still persist in an absolute denial, you may rely, says St. Bernard, it is to grant you something better. In this case the denial becomes a blessing, because what you ardently wished for may not perhaps be expedient for your salvation. Salvation being the chief blessing that God can bestow, the great object of all our pursuits, the denial of anything that should militate with it is a blessing indeed. Observe the Canaanite of whom I have already spoken : she cries aloud, but her cries are unnoticed—she redoubles her cries ; the apostles silence her—still persevering in her cries, she obtains the accomplishment of her desires. Follow her example. But should our good and merciful God refuse you, be assured it is to confer more distinguished favours. In order to increase the glory of St. Paul in heaven, he refused, though earnestly entreated, to deliver him by his power from a violent temptation wherewith he was attacked : "My grace is sufficient for thee, Saul."

Have confidence, therefore, and persevere in prayer, in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, which is the last, and perhaps the most essential character of prayer. For please to remark, that prayer in its nature is not infallible ; on the contrary, it necessarily implies a capacity of being rejected ; otherwise it would not be prayer, but command. The power and force of prayer are founded on the merits of Jesus Christ, who, by praying for us on earth, has purchased the admission of our prayers into the royal presence of God in heaven. Jesus Christ in engaging his promise, exacted that our prayers should be addressed in his name ; "Whatever you ask my Father IN MY NAME, shall be granted you." Hence the Church of God always terminates her orations by that victorious name ; and hence be you instructed to usher in all your prayers by that all-hallowed name, which carries with it irresistible force : for the Almighty Father cannot hear the celestial name without recalling the innumerable merits of his Son—that Son whose requests he always made it his duty to comply with. There is no other method of imparting efficacy to our prayers ; for though we invoke the saints in heaven, it is only, as laid down by the Council of Trent, that they should engage Jesus Christ to intercede for us, in whom and through whom alone we have access to our Heavenly Father.

In finishing, let us take a brief view of what has been said. Prayer, you have seen, is of strict obligation, and praying continually a sublime virtue : first, because prayer is a homage

we owe unto God, whereby we testify in the most perfect manner his sovereignty and our own dependence ; secondly, because prayer is the means that God has established for conveying his grace unto us, the sure method of receiving his choicest graces, and often the only method of receiving his most ordinary graces. You have seen, also, the necessary conditions of prayer with regard to the dispositions of the heart—a desire of returning to God ; with regard to the object of prayer—those things only which lead unto God ; with regard to the manner of praying—humility, confidence, attention, and perseverance, in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, which, like so many wings, should enliven and bear them up to heaven. If you pray in this manner, says St. Austin, “you have acquired the key of heaven,” and all its treasures are at your disposal. The prayers you daily offer up will draw down upon you the choicest blessings. But if you neglect prayer, or pray neglectfully, tremble, for desperate is your situation ; because, in the ordinary ways of Providence, your salvation is impracticable. To prevent this irreparable misfortune, pray as I have instructed you—pray daily, pray religiously—and you shall obtain the graces of conversion, of fulfilling all justice, of persevering to the end, and of partaking at length of that immortal crown of glory which is reserved for all the just and good in the kingdom of heaven, and which, O thou Fountain of Love and Goodness, in thy mercy grant us all, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SERMON XVI.

ON THE LOVE WE OWE OUR NEIGHBOUR.

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brethren.”—1 JOHN, c. iii., v. 14.

WHAT the apostle means by passing from death to life, is passing from a state of sin to a state of grace ; and the mark whereby we may discern this happy change—I do not say with an absolute certainty, but with that degree of probability and inward assurance which is sufficient to banish all servile fear, and administer peace and comfort to a virtuous mind—the mark, I say, whereby we may discern this happy change, which procures this great and inestimable advantage, is, “because we love our brethren ;” because we bury in oblivion the animosities, whether well or ill-founded, which heretofore separated us from our neighbour, and for the sake of Jesus

Christ, associate ourselves to him in the bonds of charity : "Because we love our brethren." For the same apostle says, "Whosoever is not just is not of God ; nor is he that loveth not his brother." It appears, therefore, my brethren, that unless you love your brethren, you can have no pretensions to justice, nor, consequently, any assurance or inward testimony of having "passed from death to life"—from the death of sin to the life of grace. If you love not your brethren, you are still under the empire of sin, and as yet buried in the shades of death : for the great apostle St. John says, "Every one that hateth his brother is a murderer ; and you know that no murderer hath life everlasting abiding in him." Can anything be stronger than these expressions of the apostle? Anything clearer, at the same time more capable of alarming our fears and rousing us to a perfect knowledge and a punctual discharge of our duty in this particular? How comes it, my brethren, and yet the fact is so, that a duty so momentous as the love of our neighbour, which involves in its consequence an interest no less than our eternal salvation, should be so little understood by the generality of Christians? Some fritter it away, others contract its bounds, whilst others scarcely allow any obligation to exist. I have much ambition then to convince you of your obligation on this head, and the extent of your obligation. But your attention must necessarily accompany me, lest by shutting your eyes to the light, you shut the door of salvation against yourselves ; and I beseech you to apply with me for the light of the Holy Ghost, and the divine influence of his heavenly rays, on our hearts as well as understandings, that, examining with simplicity his holy laws of brotherly love, they may lead us to that happy country where love alone reigns. In order to convince you of the obligation you lie under of loving your neighbour, I will,

First, lay before you the motives for that love ; and

Secondly, the nature of the love you are bound to show him.

First—Among the many motives that should engage us to the love of our neighbour, two particularly claim your most serious consideration. The first arises from the supreme power of Almighty God ; the second, from our own interest. God commands that we love our neighbour ; it is our own interest to love him—two reflections capable of setting forth our duty on this head in the clearest light.

The law of nature has implanted in the heart of man the obligation he lies under of loving his neighbour ; and in the Mosaic law this obligation was enforced by a particular pre-

cept—"Ye shall love the stranger as yourselves;" but in the law of grace, our sovereign Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, says, in the Gospel of St. Luke: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and in St. John: "What I command you is, that you love each other." The apostles, in all their writings, insist frequently upon the same obligation; so that it cannot in the least be doubted that the love of our neighbour is an injunction of the law. Not only a simple injunction, I say, but one of the chief and most material injunctions of the law; for Jesus Christ declares it to be the second precept of the law, in point of dignity: The first is: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength;" and the second: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

When our blessed Saviour came upon earth, he found this virtue very little practised among mankind, even among his own people, the Jews; and to revive the practice of this virtue, originally engraved by the finger of God upon the heart of man, and afterwards enforced by the written law of Moses, he ordered it by a special, solemn precept, as laid down in St. John: "I give you a new commandment—that you love each other, as I loved you." A new command does Christ call what was written in the law of Moses? Yes, a new command: for the charity of the faithful had grown so cold on this point, and the Jews had adhered so closely to the severities of the Mosaic law—"an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"—that brotherly or neighbourly love was scarce known in practice: and Jesus Christ, who "came down from heaven to cast fire upon earth," re-established the practice and observation of this heavenly virtue in a most particular manner, so as to make it the distinguishing mark of his religion; saying, "In this they shall know that you are my disciples—if you love each other." It was also a new command in this, that Jesus Christ, by his own blessed example, had raised it to greater dignity than was annexed to it in the old dispensation. In this sense it may likewise be considered a new command, that if it had not existed in the Old Law, Jesus Christ would have enacted it in the New: for the spirit of the law of Christ is a spirit of love and mutual benevolence. The Old Law was a law of terror, "a heavy and intolerable yoke," as St. Paul calls it; but the Christian law is a law of meekness, charity, and goodness. Neither goodness nor charity can dwell where love is absent: it is the principle that enlivens our passage through the world, and smoothenes the rough ways of life. Jesus Christ, by way of eminence,

calls it his own command : "This is my command, that you love each other." What could he have said more strong to recommend the practice of it? My command," is as much as saying, the other commands you have received before from Moses and the prophets, but I mean that you look upon this command of loving each other as my command, or a command coming immediately from me.

What shows the command of loving our neighbour to be of the greatest consequence is, that it comprises most of the injunctions of the law : for, as St. Paul observes, the most material obligations of the law, such as, "Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery," and the rest, are all comprehended in this one sentence, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The love of one's self is a principle natural to all mankind—it sets us upon avoiding evil and seeking good. The command directs us to do so by our neighbour. If we love our neighbour as Jesus Christ commands, we shall never do him the least injury ; on the contrary, we shall never refuse doing him all the service that lies in our power, and as often as he stands in need of assistance. Our assistance, it is true, may become limited, from circumstance or situation ; but the love we should bear our neighbour will always suggest the most benevolent sentiments. Hence it appears, that the love of our neighbour takes in every duty relating to mankind, and consequently must be a most material obligation—an obligation which includes very nearly the whole substance of the law. Reasoning upon this principle, St. Paul says in his epistle to the Romans : "Whoever loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law ;" and again : "The plenitude of the law is charity." Not but the law contains many injunctions besides, but because any man that has charity will certainly fulfil every duty relating to God and man, and, of course, fulfil the whole law : for, "the whole law and the prophets depend," as our Saviour declares in the Gospel, "on the two great precepts of the love of God and the love of our neighbour."

Now the love of our neighbour is not only of the greatest consequence, but of the strictest obligation ; so strict, that unless it is fulfilled, there can be no hopes of life everlasting. To make this plain to you, my brethren, it is necessary to observe, that there is no attaining eternal happiness without loving God above all things. It is not possible to love God above all things without loving your neighbour ; as is laid down in the Gospel of St. John—'If any one will say, I love God, and in the meantime hate his brother, he is a liar. For this command," he says again, "we have from God, that he

that loveth God love also his brother." So that you see it is impossible to love God without loving your neighbour: and it follows, also, that if any man doth not love his neighbour, he doth not love Almighty God; nor, of course, can have any pretensions to the kingdom of heaven. But if, on the other hand, we do love our neighbour, a strong presumption arises that we also love the Lord our God; as is suggested in the first epistle of St. John—"If we love each other, God remaineth in us, and his charity is perfect in us." The love of God and the love of our neighbour, divines say, are like two links of one chain, which are inseparably united; or like lines which terminate in the same centre; or streams which flow from one and the same source. If the connection then between the love of God and of our neighbour be so very intimate; if the one is essentially united to the other, as the shadow is to the substance; if the motives that should engage us to the practice of this heavenly virtue—the power and command of God and our own eternal salvation, be so very great, let me ask, in what manner have you hitherto discharged this important obligation of brotherly love? Whence proceed those angers, this bitterness, those quarrels, that calumny, this slander, those broils, those lawsuits? Is it from the love of your neighbour; from the love of God? Ah! my God, how languid appears your divine love in such transactions as these! how extinguished that celestial fire which animates your angels and forms the joy of the blessed! Notwithstanding the importance of this favourite command of our dear and most honoured Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, notwithstanding that eternal joys or eternal sorrows depend upon the observance of it, yet few there are who seriously consider it. But much the greater part of us look upon ourselves as having little or no connection with the rest of mankind. In our vain and mistaken notions, we fancy that our own private happiness is and should be our only care. But let them hear, and I beg the observation may never be forgotten by you—let them hear once in their lives, that God commands, and commands them under the severest terms, to extend their thoughts and their benevolence to the rest of mankind, and consider the whole race of man as one large and extensive family, every member of which, especially the poor, the forlorn, and the distressed, has an inviolable claim to the love and assistance of the whole. This is the spirit of that great and universal law of charity, which unites all mankind in the bonds of mutual love and benevolence; and is likewise the first motive for loving our neighbour—the second flows from our own interest.

Were we to consider things only in a temporal light, it is very easy to show that nothing can be more profitable than the great law of universal charity—for as man is formed for society, and liable, from the very frame of his constitution, to several wants and necessities, it is plain he must need the assistance of his brother man in many occurrences of human life. How is this assistance procured? By the great law of universal charity—that law which obliges us, under pains and woes of eternal duration, to assist our brethren in their wants, to direct them in their doubts, to comfort them in their afflictions, to serve and attend them in their infirmities. In fact, without this law man would not be man as formed by God, because the instinctive principle would be destroyed, which points out doing as we would be done by; man would become a species of brute—a tyrant to man. Is it not from the inobservance of this great and universal law, that all the miseries of mankind arise? Is it not the corrupted source of fell dissension, bitter animosity, black fraud, and cruel injustice? Did we all love our neighbour as the law ordains, who could ever think of offending, much less hurting or destroying his brother? Did we love our neighbour, we would always give, always receive every mutual, every necessary aid. Did we love our neighbour as the law appoints, man would then become a species of divinity to man. Then the great would never abuse their power, nor the rich their opulence—envy and jealousy would depart from the world; and the cold limbs of feeble misery would arise at the beck of benevolence; wealth, like the sun, would never cease to diffuse its benign influence all around, even to the extremities of the creation—then, in fine, all mankind would live upon earth as in a terrestrial paradise—in union, in peace, in possession of the essential comforts of life; and death then would be as a door opened from a paradise here to the paradise of heaven!

O my brethren! have you ever considered the love of your neighbour in this sublime point of view? Have you followed up effectually this consideration by action? No: the law of charity is not observed; and, therefore, man becomes commonly the greatest enemy to man, inasmuch as he frequently proves the destruction of those whose welfare he should promote—more savage than the wild and savage beast, who never bends his rage against his own, but those of a different species.

Let us, however, remove all lesser considerations, and raise our thoughts to things of a more exalted nature—the spiritual blessings that attend the love of our neighbour; the first of

which is the favour and friendship of God. St. John tells you, I mean the Holy Ghost tells you by his pen: "If we love each other, God remaineth in us, and his charity is perfect in us." Now I beseech you to reflect how great those blessings must be which necessarily wait upon man whom the great eternal God condescends to love; what effusions of grace must he not continually derive from the inexhaustible fountain of all grace and goodness? Amongst men, the truest friendship and sincerest affection remain often ineffectual, because it is not always in the power of men to do good to those they love—but with God it is quite otherwise; his goodness being always attended with omnipotent power, he cannot love without bestowing the blessings that ever flow from his love; because his power being equal to his goodness, the effects of the one must necessarily follow the other; and it follows that the desire of doing good, which is the very nature of love, is the same with Almighty God as doing it in reality. Now what is it that makes man the object of the love of God, and consequently of his blessings?—the love of your neighbour, as the Holy Ghost told you before, in the words of St. John; and therefore the same apostle exhorts us "to have, above all things, mutual charity for each other;" because "charity," or the love of our neighbour, "covereth a multitude of sins." Nothing can be more comfortable than this assurance of the apostle, with regard to the wholesome consequences of the love of our neighbour. Where is the man (not on this earth) who is not conscious of having frequently offended the Divine Majesty, and of being greatly in debt to the justice of God? One of the most effectual modes of repairing those offences, and the many insults we have offered the Most High in violating his laws, is by loving our neighbour; as is laid down in the Gospel of St. Mark—"To love one's neighbour as himself is greater than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." I have dwelt considerably upon this subject, because it is one of the most essential points of our religion—because it is the great second command of the law—because it is the new and favourite command of Jesus Christ—and because it is a command we all have so great an interest in, as our happiness, both in this world and in the next, materially depends on the observance thereof. Having informed you of the great and powerful motives that should engage you to the love of your neighbour, I did promise, and I now mean to perform that promise, to lay before you the essential character of the love you are bound to show your neighbour—to which I solicit your particular attention.

Second—As the love of our neighbour is absolutely and indispensably requisite for the kingdom of God, it is a point of the first importance to know when and how to discharge this duty.

For this purpose it is necessary that the love we bear our neighbour be religious in principle, sincere and effectual in execution.

Religious in principle means, that the love we show our brethren doth arise from a motive of religion ; either because they are made to the image and likeness of Almighty God, and capable, on that account, of knowing and loving him in this life, and of seeing and enjoying him in the next—or because they are our brethren in Christ, called to the same faith, destined to the same rewards, partakers of the same sacraments, blessed with the same graces—in a word, because they are living members of the mystical body of Christ. This is what St. Paul sets forth when he says : “ We are all one body in Christ, and each of us members one of another.” Loving our neighbour in this manner is loving him without exception ; and yet, in this world, it is not uncommon to see people profess and even show the greatest regard and friendship for a certain set of acquaintances, who are distinguished by rank, or agreeable in society, or kind or benevolent in several occurrences of life—the rest of men are all excluded, many despised, others hated and abhorred. Is this loving your neighbour as God commands? By no means: it is loving as pagans do, not as Christians should—for “ If you only love those that do good unto you, what more do you do than the very heathens themselves?” The second great precept of the law obliges you to love mankind without exception—the Greek and the barbarian, the Jew and the Gentile, the unbeliever, the dissenter, and the infidel. You may, and should indeed pity their errors, and the darkness they are in, and pray that the sun of justice may enlighten their understandings and lead them back to the ways of justice—but as for themselves, you are obliged to love them, to love them in Jesus Christ, according to the command—“ Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Far be then from any one to think, or to say, that it is lawful to hate, much less to injure, those that differ from any other in a religious principle. No: the Church of Christ does, and always did, extend her charity to every society of men that inhabit the wide surface of the earth ; as must appear plainly to every man who considers her conduct impartially. For, let me ask, what other motive but the most pure and universal charity could engage her to employ and

to sacrifice thousands of her most generous sons, in the remotest regions of the earth, to procure the conversion and the eternal salvation of those that are born in infidelity, or that have deserted the ways of heaven? The want of charity is always attended with the utmost indifference; who is he that troubles himself in the least about those he neither loves nor regards? If, therefore, we see the Church of Christ daily exerting the most indefatigable zeal for people of all ranks and conditions, however different they may be in their religious worship, is it not evident it must proceed from the most warm and universal love?

If we loved our neighbour from a religious principle, we should never be induced for his sake to act in any way inconsistent with the law of God. Many love their neighbours, but love them too much: for instance, a man in power, to favour a friend, will frequently transgress the strictest laws of equity and justice; a parent, from an excessive and mistaken fondness, will frequently overlook the misconduct of a child, which often is the cause of its eternal perdition; a faithful and generous friend, from a false notion of friendship, will frequently join an intimate acquaintance in the execution of the most unjust and unlawful designs. But this is not loving your neighbour in Christ and for Christ—this is loving according to the flesh, but not according to the Spirit. “Walk,” says St. Paul, “in mutual love, as Jesus Christ hath loved us.” Now, the chief object of the love of Christ for man was his spiritual welfare and salvation; if, therefore, you mean to love your neighbour as Christ commands, you never will condescend to anything contrary to the good of his soul: for a consent or condescension of this nature would in reality be an expression of the most mortal hatred, as under the appearance of friendship, it brings about his eternal damnation.

In a word, if we loved our neighbour from a motive of religion, we would consider every man as a member of Christ, and, consequently, treat him with the sentiments he deserves in that character. This is the meaning of St. Paul when he directs us to “prevent each other with mutual honour and respect.” For there is no creature, my brethren, that has the image of Almighty God visibly impressed upon his soul, or is dignified with the name of Christ, and ennobled with his grace, but is worthy, on that very account, of the highest veneration. But the misfortune is, that people seldom consider others but in the wrong light in which they are placed by the mistaken principles of the world, which affix the notion of greatness and appropriate all respect to wealth and power alone. Hence

it follows, even in the Christian world, that every man destitute of the advantages of fortune is looked upon with cold indifference, if not with silent contempt. But be pleased to consider, that the person thus looked upon is of the human kind, and, consequently, one of the most distinguished works of God—be pleased to consider, that he is a member of Christ, a child of God, and an heir to the kingdom of heaven. Is he not redeemed by the most precious blood of Christ? Is he not the purchase of the death and sufferings of a God? Place him, then, in these shining lights, and then see if he be not worthy your attention, your esteem, love, and veneration. As Malachy observes: “If we all have but one and the same Master, the Almighty God; if it be one and the same God that has created us all, and created us to his likeness and image: how comes it to pass, that any one should disregard his brother? If we loved our neighbour from a motive of religion, we certainly would bear with all the weaknesses and imperfections of every individual: for “true charity,” St. Paul says, “is patient and bountiful.” Instead of this Christian meekness which the apostle recommends, what do you generally see in the world? A world of airs, and follies, and selfishness; a world of unsubdued, inflammable tempers, ready to take fire at every trifle. “There is no bearing him!” What is that so very disagreeable in your neighbour which you cannot bear? “His rigid temper, his severe ways, his austere aspect; everything in him is in the highest degree shocking.” Take care that your vanity or self-love have not magnified his foibles, and raised mountains from mole-hills. Look into yourself, and there, perhaps, you will find greater imperfections by far than those which prove so offensive in the conduct of your neighbour. You cannot bear with your neighbour—nevertheless, you require your neighbour should bear with you. He is disagreeable! Are you less so yourselves? But admitting you are, and his foibles as great as you represent them, is he not still a Christian? Is he not your brother in Christ? Is he not a person God commands you to love; whose failings, consequently, you ought to bear with? “Bear each other’s burdens,” St. Paul says to the Galatians, “and so shall you fulfil the law of Christ.” If, therefore, you do not bear with each other, you cannot be deemed to have fulfilled the law.

It is not, however, enough that the love we bear our neighbour be religious in its principle, it must likewise be sincere and effectual in the execution: for Jesus Christ says, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Nothing can be more sincere or effectual than the love we bear ourselves: it is discernible in

every scene, in every action of life. Even when we do good to others, is it not generally our own private interest we seek? This inclination to self-interest is so strong, that it rules in every affection of the mind, and seems to be interwoven with our very nature: insomuch that it is ourselves in reality we love, at the very time that we mean to testify our love unto others. If, therefore, you purpose to fulfil the law of charity, you must love your neighbour sincerely and effectually, as you love yourselves. You are not, however, to imagine, that this precept obliges you to love your neighbour as much as yourselves. No: the terms of the law do not imply an equality of love, as divines observe, but a similitude or likeness of love. The great rule of charity whereby we are bound to the love of our neighbour, is laid down by Jesus Christ in the Gospel of St. Luke, which directs, "that you do unto others as you would they did unto you." Now as you could not in reason expect, that your neighbour gave you the preference, when the occasion offers, of procuring a considerable advantage: so neither can he expect, nor are you obliged to give him a preference upon a like occasion. The law requires that you love him, not as much as yourself, but in the same manner or order in which you love yourself. To illustrate this point, which is really very nice, divines observe that the love we bear ourselves appears in two things—the sentiments of the heart and our outward actions. We not only wish ourselves well, but likewise procure ourselves every advantage of body and soul that we can: in order, therefore, to love our neighbour as ourselves, we must behave towards him in the same manner; this is, we are bound not only to wish him well, but likewise to procure him every advantage that lies in our power, and as often as he stands in need of the same. The great St. Augustine, expounding this passage, says: "We love our neighbours truly as ourselves, when we wish them the same advantages we wish unto ourselves, and procure them the same advantages we would willingly procure ourselves."

Two things appear from this: first—that in consequence of the great law of mutual charity, we are obliged never to do any harm to our neighbour; and, secondly—to do him all the good, to render him every service in our power, as often as occasion requires, although he were our most mortal enemy. But among the blessings arising from the exercise of mutual charity among mankind, none is so distinguished, from its excellence and importance, as the love of God in this life, and the possession of his kingdom in the life to come—so you

are bound by the faithful discharge of this duty, to bend your chief endeavours to procure for your neighbour this grand, this unspeakable, this inestimable good. In virtue of this obligation, you are bound to sacrifice every temporal interest, even your very life, for your neighbour's salvation, when it depends thereon. Thus St. John says, in his first epistle, "By this we know the charity of God, because he laid down his life for us : and we ought to lay down our lives for our brethren." Indeed the occasion of laying down your life for your brethren, seldom occurs, with regard to the bulk of mankind ; but this frequently happens with regard to the pastors of the Church, and those that have the care of souls : as for the rest, they are bound in conscience to be inwardly disposed to do so, from a strong and well-founded assurance, that God will enable them to discharge their duty in this particular when the occasion offers.

I feel it a duty to go thus far in showing you the extent, the elevation, and the perfection of the great law of mutual charity. But, unhappily, many there are who know not their duty on this head ; many there are who, far from sacrificing the least temporal interest to the spiritual advantage of their neighbours, are the first to solicit, to seduce, and urge them on to the commission of the most sinful actions, in order either to gratify their passions, or to preserve a most insignificant interest.

Unhappy men ! how long will you be strangers to the love you owe your neighbour ? You cannot love him whilst you are instrumental to his eternal perdition ? you cannot love him whilst you refuse contributing to his eternal happiness—but why shall man sacrifice his interest to the spiritual good of his neighbour ? Already have I told you—because God commands it ; because your neighbour's salvation is of a higher nature, and vastly more estimable, than any temporal interest whatsoever. "My little children," says St. John, "let us not love in word, nor with the tongue ; but in deed and truth." Thus I require you this day to love your brethren, love them without exception, in Christ and for Christ ; love them as yourselves sincerely and effectually. By loving thus, we show our love for Almighty God, and Almighty God will show his love for us. How ? by making us one day partakers of the great and inconceivable felicity he reserves in heaven for those that love and serve him upon earth. Amen.

SERMON XVII.

ON THE PASSION.

“Christ died for our sins—the just for the unjust—that he might offer us unto God.”—1 PETER, c. iii., v. 18.

WAS it possible, my brethren, to express in more succinct and lively terms than the apostle has done, the mournful subject that calls us all to the foot of the cross on this lamentable day? At once he lays before us the chief object of our attention—the Sufferings of our Lord—“Christ died for our sins,” the cause of his sufferings, our sins and iniquities—“the just for the unjust,” the object of his sufferings—our reconciliation with God, “that he might offer us unto God.” Here is abundant matter to call forth reflection and fix our thoughts upon the present subject. On other occasions it may be necessary to awaken attention by pious artifices, but here the cause speaks loudly of itself. The profound and adorable scenes which the cross this day exhibits to our view are most striking, as well in their nature as in all their circumstances—the humiliations of our Redeemer and the excess of his torments, the savage fury of his enemies, the mournful sentiments of the universal Church, the awful silence and gloom that cover the sanctuary, the pious expectations of you, my friends—all tend to excite and prepare the soul for contemplating the tragedy which Calvary this day exhibits. Let us indulge this happy disposition, and consider at leisure the most moving subject of our holy religion—the passion and death of Jesus Christ; but consider it in a plain and simple manner, attended with such reflections only as naturally arise from the subject and present themselves to the mind. Fairly and nakedly to lay this subject before you, is the surest way to expose it in an advantageous light: any additional ornament would only divert our thoughts from the consideration of an object wherein our dearest interests are involved. This is my design—but to reduce a vast extended matter to some bounds, I look upon the death of Christ, after the apostle St. Paul, as the sacrifice of all mankind. This, I dare say, is the strictest as well as the highest notion that can be formed of the passion of our Redeemer.

First, then, we shall see this heavenly victim loaded with our sins;

Secondly, struck in punishment of our sins: and,

Thirdly, consumed in expiation of our sins.

Jesus Christ charges himself with our sins in the Garden of Olives—Jesus Christ atones for our sins in the different tribu-

nals—Jesus Christ effaces our sins upon Mount Calvary. In the first place, we shall see our Saviour plunged into an ocean of sorrow; in the second place, sinking under the weight of the most cruel torments; in the third place, expiring upon a cross—everywhere we shall find motives of love and gratitude for our Redeemer—of sorrow and confusion for our sins!

Venerable Cross—made illustrious by the adorable burden you bore—sink deep into our hearts, and touch them with the lively pangs our Saviour felt within your arms; make us commiserate his pains, and bewail our infidelities, the only source of all his anguish!

First—The fatal hour is come—that hour foretold by the prophets, when hell in all its fury, the world in all its envy, co-operate to raise a tempest which rages uncontrolled against Jesus Christ; or to speak more clearly, with the prophet Isaias, that hour when God the Father, in vindication of his honour blasted by the disobedience of man, is to discharge on his only begotten Son all the punishments due to sin: “For the wickedness of my people I have struck him.” The injury the Almighty had received from the violation of his laws is always present to his eternal mind, and calls out for a just and ample satisfaction: for nothing is more inconsistent with the wisdom and justice of a God, than to leave an action unpunished which necessarily tends to his dishonour. But where shall this just, this ample satisfaction be found? All the reparations of man are limited in their nature, and, consequently, bear no proportion with an offence given to an unlimited, infinite Being. Where, then, shall this just, this ample satisfaction be found? Wherever I cast my eyes I perceive nothing but sin and misery—among the numerous tribes that cover the whole face of the earth, not one but stands himself in need of a Redeemer. Man, therefore, is abandoned to his miserable fate, and doomed to mourn, with overflowing tears, his unchangeable condition. Such had been his misfortune in effect, were it not for the unspeakable charity of the Son of God, who in those desperate circumstances steps forth, as the royal prophet says—steps forth to act the part of a mediator: “Then have I said, Behold I come.”

Imagine you are present in the Garden of Olives, which skirts Jerusalem—that garden which he often sanctified before by his presence in holy prayer. Here Jesus Christ is pleased to begin the grand work of our salvation. Behold him prostrate on the ground, his thoughts full of his sacrifice. After a long, deep, important pause, he breaks forth into these words, Lo! I come, eternal Father, to appease thy wrath, and satisfy for

the transgressions of mankind : " then have I said, Behold, I come." Immortal by nature, I have assumed a mortal body, to take upon me all the punishments of sin—my sufferings, increased by the immediate influence of my divinity, will repair all thy glory, and make amends for the rebellion of man : " Then have I said, Behold, I come." What more can an injured God require than the humiliations and sufferings of a suppliant God? No longer shall thy altars smoke with the fruitless blood of animals : " *Holocausts for sin thou hast disliked :*" behold here that long-expected victim, that mystical lamb, which is to take away the sins of the world—pour down upon me all thy fury ; let my blood serve to quench thy flaming wrath, and wash away the guilt of sin !

He finishes—the oblation is accepted—Jesus Christ, in the eyes of his Father, is no more, as St. Paul declares, than as an object of malediction, a victim doomed to bear the iniquities of the world. In fact, from this moment all the sins that ever were, or ever shall be ; the brutish dissoluteness of lust, the wild havoc of ambition, the inhuman projects of revenge, the cruel strokes of oppression, the excesses of intemperance, the devastation of error, the scandal of impiety ; our blasphemies and imprecations, our frauds and injustices, our lies and dissensions, thickened into a dark cloud, rush down at once upon him, and oppress him, as the royal prophet says, with their ponderous load. Observe, my brethren, how cruel was the task of our Saviour to undergo this first scene of his passion—a God essentially free from sin, necessarily averse to sin—to see himself beset, encompassed, charged with sin ! What cruelty greater, what severity harder ? Infinite Wisdom of my God, thou alone canst comprehend it ! Weak and guilty as we are, we discover only some faint glimmerings—and the hideousness of sin, the blindness of our understanding, the corruption of our will, conceal all that is most shocking in it. The all-seeing eye of our Saviour seized at once the deformity of its nature and its opposition to the Divinity ; and still he takes upon him all its horrors. Yes ; the God of purity takes upon him all our obscenities ; the God of justice, all our iniquities ; the God of sanctity, all our irreligion and impieties !

Jesus Christ not only takes upon him our sins, but our sins attended with the heaviest punishments. Here in the garden our Saviour foresaw all the humiliations he was to undergo, all the severities he was to endure ; he foresaw the infidelity of his disciples, the animosity of the Jews, the cruelty of the executioners—he foresaw the cuffs, the stripes, the thorns, the

lance, the gall, the vinegar, the cross—he foresaw all this, not successively and according to the different intervals of time and place, but in one comprehensive moment: in one frightful point he foresaw the whole of that chalice prepared for him by his Father, which, bitter as it is, in a few hours he is to drink off to the dregs—he foresaw, I say, the inflexible, the terrible rigour of his Father during the long course of his sufferings, in exerting all the arms of his justice. Was it not enough, O my God! to let loose the malice of man? Among so many strokes inflicted by foreign hands, must our Saviour feel the sensible strokes of a Father? Is it thus thou dost treat thy only, only begotten Son?—this Son, the bright effulgence of thy divine nature?—this Son, in whom thou didst formerly place thy comfort and delight? What is become, O my God! of thy ancient tenderness? That heaven, which some days ago poured down its softest influence, and spread all its glories around our Saviour's head, is now, according to the expression of the royal prophet, turned into a heaven of brass. And you, most charitable Redeemer, with what eyes can you behold this ocean of woes? Alas! he sickens at the sight—a secret sense of his approaching sufferings fills his heart with trouble and anxiety: “He began to grow sorrowful, and to be sad.” This sadness, these sorrows, increasing continually, throw him at last into the utmost dejectedness. What will be the effect of this desolate situation? Jesus Christ can no longer bear it. Behold him rise from the ground and seek from his apostles some relief to his sorrows—you, my friends, the early and constant companions of my toils, support my fainting spirits and console my grief, for “my soul is sorrowful even unto death.” Happy, thrice happy men! to whom it is granted to be the comforters of your Saviour, your afflicted Lord and Master. Fly quickly, fly, to receive his sighs and groans, and pour forth before him all those melting expressions of love and compassion which breathe new life into a desolate soul. But what do I perceive? You remain unmoved; a deep slumber has bound your senses in rest: your Lord is upon the rack, and you compose yourself to ease—shameful and untimely repose! How painful to the heart of Christ! Deprived of the slender satisfaction he sought for, our Saviour returns to his dreary spot of prayer, where he groans under the weight of swelling grief. His force is spent, his courage exhausted—he grows weak to such a degree, that he would most certainly expire, were it not that an angel flies from heaven and revives his dying vigour. “Then appeared an angel from heaven comforting him.”

How different is the situation of Jesus in the desert of Sinai and in the wilderness, from what it is in the garden ! There he appeared in all the pomp and majesty of a God ; if his angels throng around him, it is to serve him with all the obsequiousness due to the great Master of the universe—here he is sunk so low as to want the care and succour of those ministering spirits. But what will not his love for man reduce him to ?

After this celestial visit, Jesus Christ, it is true, recovers his accustomed strength. But will his condition be the more comfortable ? No ; new scenes of woe succeed each other ; of woes more heavy by their perfect opposition. From this oppressive weakness, a new storm assails his heart, and awakens all his fears. The bitter chalice he is shortly to drink off to the last drop, is painted in his fancy in the brightest colours—the death of the cross—the cruel, ignominious death of the cross—there, there is what awakens all his apprehensions and sharpens all his fears ! Whenever he views the dismal prospect his blood chills within his veins. The God of all majesty debased by the vilest creatures ; the Source of all power, all grandeur, subjected to contemptible slaves ; the Author of life dying between two guilty robbers, with all the appearance of their guilt—what terrors must have hung upon that thought ! Jesus Christ himself is terrified—he trembles ; he swoons ; he falls again upon the ground : “ he fell upon his face.” His fears now overpower his humanity ; he perspires blood at every limb, at every pore ; he falls and agonizes in convulsive pains, “ being in an agony.” I cannot explain, nor was it given to man to conceive, much less explain, how much our Saviour suffered from those struggles of nature. Some faint glimmerings let us merely catch from his words—pressed by the immensity of those inward pains, more cruel than those outward pains that follow, he cries out to his Eternal Father—Thou seest this multitude of woes that surround me on every side—on thee depends the disposition of all things ; avert this dreadful storm that is ready to burst upon my head—“ Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.” this bitter chalice of my passion ; this chalice overflowing with complicated woes. Do you, my brethren, perceive all the energy and force of these expressions ? That same Jesus who, a few moments before, longed for the approach of his passion—“ With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you ;” that same Jesus who so often spoke with delight of his future passion ; that same Jesus, I say, who shortly before so generously devoted

himself to all the rigours of his passion—behold him now, through the excess of anguish, requesting, and requesting most earnestly, to be exempted from his passion: “Let this chalice pass from me.” Eternal Father! whose paternal eye beholds, and who in mercy consoles the well-earned sufferings of sinful man, do thou hear the prayer of my Saviour! He calls, he invokes thee to pass away the chalice—hear thou, and pass it away. It is a God that calls—thy second self that requests!

But what have I said? O let me recall those inconsiderate wishes. The affliction of our Saviour is excessive, it is true, but necessary for our salvation. This he knows full well, and by all this reluctance intends no more than to show his incomprehensible charity. For now his resolution and strength collect and rise above all the opposition of nature; and now with serenity he accepts that chalice, so frightful and so long refused: “Not my will, but thine, be done.” O Father! I reflect no longer on the severity of my destiny—by my blood man is to be redeemed and restored to his forfeited happiness—in this view the cross smiles before me, and fills my soul with delight: “Not my will, but thine, be done.”

Illustrious goodness and charity of our Saviour, to subject himself in this manner to all the rigours of the most cruel death! In the various incidents and trials of life, is it thus you behave, my friends? With the like religious submission do you receive all the crosses that Providence daily lays before you? No; at the very name of affliction you tremble. You murmur at its approach, and once charged with the load, you drag it on with impatience, with fury and despair. Is this acting the part of a disciple of Christ? Is this taking up daily your cross, as you are directed in the Gospel, and treading in the steps of a crucified God? The Scriptures tell us that Jesus Christ himself could not enter into the possession of his glory, but by many sufferings and tribulations: “It became necessary that Christ should suffer, and thus to enter into the glory of God.” Do not you know, at least you should know, that you never can partake of this same glory, but by conforming with Jesus Christ, the divine model of all the elect: “Making yourselves conformable to the image of his Son.” Your grievances, each one says, are so great, that they are intolerable. My brethren, can they be compared with the cross of our Redeemer? The effort he makes to receive it from his Father’s hands, is so violent, that his blood, forcibly compressed within his veins, shoots out through every limb, and bedews the ground he is stretched on: “And his sweat became

as drops of blood trickling upon the ground." Come, now, and contemplate one moment your Saviour and your God lying on the cold earth in this condition, without motion, without vigour, all covered with blood!

A God suffers and bleeds the very moment he takes our sins upon him. How great an evil, then, must sin be, since it cannot be atoned for otherwise than by the sufferings of a God! Surely it must be that great evil mentioned by the Holy Ghost; that "grand evil;" an evil so far superior to all other evils upon earth, that they cannot even be compared: for those things generally counted evils—dishonour, pain, poverty, sickness, misery, destruction, are limited in their nature, and confined to man alone; but sin soars above all nature, and strikes at the very Divinity. This grand evil, mysterious and incomprehensible, becomes plain and intelligible by one view of Jesus in the garden; and this sad view is more eloquent than all the expressions of men or angels. A God suffers the very moment he takes our sins upon him.—How great, then, must that aversion be which God bears unto sin, since he chooses to see his only begotten Son a victim to the severest torments, rather than leave sin unpunished! What punishments, what torments, then, have we just cause to fear, from the numerous sins we daily commit! If "the green and living stock," which is Christ, is treated with so much severity, what will become of "the withered, useless branches?" Guilty as we all are, what mighty reasons then to apprehend the heaviest strokes of divine vengeance—all the effusions of the wrath of heaven! A God suffers the very moment he takes our sins upon him—how great, then, should be our sorrow for those sins which made our Saviour suffer? Should it not equal the sorrow of the innocent Jesus, which is compared by the prophet to a great sea? "Thy sorrow is like unto a vast, unbounded ocean." Should we not cry out with David: "Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes, that night and day I may bewail" the wickedness of my sinful life? Should we not protest with the penitent king of Israel, that henceforth our chief occupation shall be, in the bitterness of our hearts, to ruminate over the multiplied crimes that stain our sinful days? Should not those crimes that press on Jesus in the garden, and cover him with blood, make us cry out with the famed publican of the Gospel, I have sinned, O my God! but what sin is, I now only know from the sorrows of my Lord in the garden—look on me with eyes of mercy; behold him, and "be propitious unto me a sinner!"

Far from entertaining these Christian like sentiments, we generally look upon the sufferings of Christ, and our sins, the only cause of his sufferings, without the utmost indifference—a cold and languid indifference, bordering on obduracy. But if no feeling remains for our sins, or for our Jesus suffering for them—come and deplore our want of feeling. A juster cause never claimed a tear—insensibility for the sufferings of a God, who engages to atone for all our sins, approaches that hardness which leads directly to perdition. Your God suffers and bleeds the very moment he takes your sins upon him, with no other motive than to procure your eternal happiness. What return does such generous love deserve? Should a man shelter us at a considerable expense from some impending misfortune—should he save our lives at the expense of his own—words would be inadequate to express our gratitude. But still greater are the benefits which flow from our Saviour, who undertakes, by the most cruel death of the cross, not only to deliver us from the burning flames of hell, but to place us for ever in his heavenly mansions. Illustrious love of my God! Illustrious charity! In silence let us admire it; and after a momentary pause, we shall behold Jesus Christ now charged with our sins in the Garden of Gethsemani—now atoning for them in the different tribunals.

Second—As different sins had reigned, and were to reign among men in after ages, so Jesus Christ in his passion subjects himself to different torments. Let us not undertake to enumerate them. The task were impracticable. We can only touch upon the most remarkable among them, which may be reduced to the infidelity of his disciples, the outrages of the Jews, and the cruelty of his executioners. Those are the heavy strokes that are to fall successively on this heavenly victim, and prepare it for its approaching end.

What barbarous hand is to open the second scene of the passion of Christ? So odious a design is undoubtedly reserved for one of his most cruel enemies—No: reproach of mankind—one honoured with his friendship, entrusted with his secrets, admitted to a share in his functions, a friend, a confidant, an apostle is the first to betray his heavenly master! Already the black design, the infernal scheme is concerted. See him at the head of a troop of soldiers, marching into the garden—depravedly resolute, he approaches our Saviour and embraces him: this was the sign to make him known. Perfidious man, is it thus you behave towards your generous master? What fury burns within your breast? Declare what injuries you have received at his hands. On his

side, I perceive nothing but love and friendship—are these the wrongs that forced you to conspire his ruin? Stop, Judas, stop, and consider awhile your odious project—'tis your God and your Saviour you are going to give up into the hands of his most cruel enemies. See, what goodness shines in his countenance! Knowing your intention, he still calls you by the tender name of friend—should not this tender word melt you into compassion? But your relentless heart is hardened in its iniquity. Who is there among you but is filled, with me, with indignant anger at the recital of this fact? This anger is highly laudable I own; but should it not be turned entirely against ourselves? United to Jesus Christ by the firmest ties, and bound by the most solemn protestations of inviolable fidelity, how often have we betrayed his interest. Reflect a while, and blush to see it!

From the shameful view of our own perfidies let us return to Jesus Christ. Soon as the soldiers distinguish him, they rudely rush, seize upon his person, bind him in chains, and violently drag him along to the high priest, to be judged according to the formality of the laws. Most dear and honoured friends of Christ, apostles! ye highly honoured, bosom friends of your Lord, who from being eye-witnesses of his public life, of his actions, miracles, instructions and benefits to mankind, can vindicate him from all calumnies, come and prove your fidelity to your dear Lord; come, quickly, come, and vindicate his name—your united testimonies will clear him from the false aspersions of his cruel foes. Appear quickly!—alas! “his disciples leaving him all fled away.” All fled away! Where is now that noble resolution, you, Peter, and all the rest, some time ago expressed, when you protested you were ready to die in his defence? You now abandon him on the first view of danger. But I mistake: my feelings at the flight of ten of his apostles, made me include all. One, more faithful than the rest, keeps our Saviour in view: “Peter followed him afar off, even into the court of the High Priest.” Surely his presence will be most agreeable to our Saviour and efface the memory of his companions’ desertion. It were natural to think so, but the contrary will soon appear. Peter follows our Saviour, but he follows him only from afar. He loves Jesus Christ; but his love is not proof against any considerable danger. So weak a flame cannot long subsist; one moment and it expires. A maid servant comes, and looking on the apostle, says: “Thou also wast with JESUS of Nazareth. But he denied, saying: I neither know nor understand what thou sayest.” Ah! Peter, Peter: was it to dis-

honour your Master in a more public manner, that you followed him hither too? Could this wound be given to the sacred heart of Jesus by none but his companion on Mount Thabor? Why did you not run down the stream that hurried away your fellow-companions? Your apostasy then would have been concealed, and consequently less shameful to your Master.

This infidelity of Peter must have been the more afflicting to our Saviour, because on Peter he had founded his Church in preference to all the others, and specially distinguished him by a sight of his glorified body. This infidelity of Peter appears the more black from the slightness of the cause that produced it—only a servant maid, a woman armed neither with power, nor weapon, nor terror, asks a simple question, and behold, rank perfidy follows—deliberately and systematically he answers again and again, I know him not: “Then he began to curse and to swear that he knew not the man,” Heart of my Jesus, speak your feelings by your looks: “and the Lord turning, looked on Peter!”

What gloomy thoughts arise; what bitter remembrance is revived in the mind, on considering this infidelity of Peter! Our unhappy countrymen, our brethren and friends daily deny and renounce their God, in renouncing their faith: that faith planted by Jesus Christ, transmitted from the apostles by a regular succession of ministers unto us; and which same faith we proclaim unto you. But you should recall to your remembrance also the whole tenor of your own lives; those lives composed of vice and error, whereby you often renounced your God in fact and reality, as blessed Paul declares, “denying him by facts,” or deeds. So far are we all upon a level with Peter. But shall we be like him for the remainder of our lives? The look of Jesus piercing his heart, “going out he wept bitterly.” This contrition so perfect in its origin, far from diminishing, increased by time; for, sacred history says, his venerable face was furrowed by the streams of tears that daily flowed from his eyes. As we followed and exceeded Peter by our crimes, let us follow him in bewailing them all the days of our lives. Let us lament and call for mercy to our merciful God, and he will forgive as he forgave Peter.

The sport of the Jewish rabble in the hall of the High Priest, our Saviour remained that whole night. What jibes, and taunts, and scoffs what indignities he endured that night, are only recorded in the chancery of heaven! A glimpse only is handed to us. The rabble that night “mocked him: and struck him: and they blindfolded him, and smote his face,

and blasphemed him," and a thousand ways abused him. Next morning he is dragged to, and arraigned before the Jewish Sanhedrim. Behold here the inversion of all order—the just summoned before the tribunal of injustice—innocence accused—and the sovereign Judge of heaven and earth arraigned by prejudiced and guilty men. How looks this show of justice compared with that solemn Court which will be held when closing time shall put an end to the universe!—There all nations of the earth shall stand before Jesus Christ, to receive from his divine lips the irrevocable decree of their eternal destiny. Here this same Jesus, divested of all his power and grandeur, bending under the weight of indignities and humiliations, appears like a felon before a mortal and corrupted judge. Equity and truth shall there preside—here falsehood and injustice bear the sway. There a beam of light shot from the radiant cross shall disclose before the whole world the guilt of reprobated sinners—here the darkest plots are employed to overshadow the brightest innocence. In the first step of their proceeding, witnesses are suborned to swear away our Saviour's life. Some accuse him of disturbing the people, and scattering everywhere the seeds of sedition. Others impeach him with a design of subverting the whole power of the government, and fixing himself upon the throne. Others, in a word, charge him with impiety, for having said that in three days he would demolish the Temple and build it up again. Because Jesus Christ had preached throughout all Judea the words of life, now he is traduced as a public disturber—because Jesus Christ had declared the kingdom of heaven was arrived, now he is traduced as an ambitious usurper—because Jesus Christ had foretold he would destroy and revive his body, the living temple of his soul, now he is traduced as an impious and sacrilegious man. In fine nothing is left untried. Though the flat contradictions of their testimonies belie each other—yet all this is overlooked by the malice of his enemies.

Are you not astonished, my brethren, to behold injustice carried so far? Far more astonishing is the conduct of our Saviour, amidst this storm of injustice. To those furious assaults of the Jews what does he oppose? what defence does he make? Incredible, indeed! were it not recorded in the holy Scriptures—silence and silence alone. Speak, sweet Jesus! speak—one word will show your spotless virtue and the iniquity of your enemies. Expose their hatred, their calumnies, their contrivances, their incoherent accusations. Still is Jesus silent. This mysterious silence, what doth it mean? Surely

our Saviour intended thereby to teach us a great lesson of morality, and reprove our over-warm sensibility, which makes us blaze at the approach of an injury. If honour is attacked, or reputation blasted, or either tarnished, immediately we break out into murmurs, imprecations, and bitter invectives. A God calumniated, reviled, and abused, lays aside all vindications, even murmur, that last sad relief of the forlorn and afflicted; and shall guilty man undertake to vindicate himself by the most violent and unlawful means? No: let envy and malice load me with the most infamous aspersions, my only resource shall be, where justice cannot take place, to bear my wrongs in a religious and submissive silence. This is the great duty our Saviour points out whilst he stands silent amidst his accusers. On this great example let us often dwell—an example no less instructive to the Christian than astonishing to the Jew.

Justly astonished at this uncommon silence of our Saviour, they conjure him at length, in the name of the living God, to declare what he is: “If thou be the CHRIST tell us. And he said unto them; If I shall tell you, you will not believe me; and if I shall also ask you, you will not answer me, nor let me go: but hereafter the Son of Man shall be sitting on the right hand of the power of God.” This meek and moderate answer, far from satisfying, only exasperates his enemies, for “one of the servants, standing by, gave Jesus a blow on the face.”

In days of yore when insult had been offered to one of the prophets, a mere man, by one of the kings of Israel, the royal hand stretched out to offer this insult immediately withered. Assert thy own dignity, O Lord, and overwhelm thy enemies with one of those dreadful looks which unhinge the frame of conscious nature! Perish, at least, that sacrilegious hand! No: the God of power is all mildness and charity—“If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil: but if well, why strikest thou me?” Come, now, my angry, vindictive friends; come and learn from Jesus Christ how to bear, how to wipe off the stain of an affront. He is God, he is dishonoured, insulted, affronted; he has the power, the right to revenge, and still he revenges not. Learn wisdom now, my injured brethren, from this sublime example. Repress vindictive anger, banish resentment, and never let it die in the ruin or in the blood of your neighbour. Learn, I say, for it is a God that instructs; and a God who is going to die for the love of you. Remember the stroke of enmity cannot reach your neighbour without passing first through the heart of Jesus; and will you add to his woes and sufferings? Leave so foul a deed to the unpitying

Jews. As for you, my brethren, assume more Christian sentiments. Show some feeling for the pains of Christ. Come and lay down generously at his feet all your wrongs and animosities. Offer them all as a holocaust of love for love. But should you still persist in your destructive projects, know then you renounce all share in the merits of your Redeemer; know the ruin you now meditate—the blood you now thirst for, will one day fall upon you in floods of calamity; know that this God who now requests, will then command—but command as the inexorable avenger of your humanity!

The cruelty of the Jews is not satisfied with insults. They aim at nothing less than the death of Jesus Christ. Already they pronounce him guilty; but as the Roman power had some time before extended its arms over the kingdom of Judea, and like other kingdoms reduced it to a province, criminal jurisdiction was consequently removed from the Jews to the Roman governor, who was then Pontius Pilate. Before him they drag this victim of woe—here they heap up accusations upon charges, and charges upon accusations. They are examined, weighed, witnesses heard, the actions of Jesus Christ examined with the utmost minuteness, and no charge escapes a close inquiry. After all those pains, “Pilate said, I find no cause, no crime, in this man.” Justice at length takes place. The innocent is acquitted. Unbind him, then, from his disgraceful manacles, and let my Jesus enjoy sweet liberty and peace. Stop! infernal policy usurps the seat of justice, and Pilate, to serve his worldly views, will at once sacrifice the innocent and his innocence. During the trial, hearing that Jesus had lived in Galilee, immediately “he sent him away to Herod,” the Tetrarch or Governor of Galilee, “who was also himself at Jerusalem in those days,” celebrating the Passover. Base and criminal policy! but the world abounds in it. Do we not daily behold Christians squaring their lives by the principles of Pilate? To promote private interest they abandon, even trample on virtue, and basely fawn upon an odious oppressor. Bound in duty to protect the good and punish the wicked—if their fortune or ambition demand it, they no longer distinguish between virtue and vice; or distinguish them only to pass over the one and smile on the other, which should meet the severest frown. Abominable, infernal policy, how hateful to view! And yet to this policy thousands upon thousands of our fellow-creatures have been sacrificed. To this infernal policy is Christ, already acquitted, again exposed to lose his life—still dragged with ignominy by his enemies from post to pillar, from Pilate to Herod. Let our

pious reflections attend him. The wonders reported of Jesus Christ throughout all Judea, raised a great desire in Herod of seeing a man so powerful in words and actions—expecting to behold performed in their presence one of those miracles that filled the world with wonder, this prince and his court crowd around this victim of sorrow. Sudden joy flashes in their countenances, to see the man so famous everywhere, and they prepared themselves for great delight and entertainment. Their rude and greedy looks search in his person for something extraordinary, and discover nothing but meekness and simplicity. Herod “questioned him in many words; but Christ answered him nothing—and Herod, with his army, set him at nought.” Construing the silence of our Lord into contempt, they despise him whom they expected to behold a wonder-working man. And they abused him, “and mocked him, putting on him a white garment, and sent him back to Pilate.” Profane world, how perverse are thy ways! The Author of all truth is before you, and you cannot discern him; the Author of all goodness, and you revile him; the Source of all grandeur, and you insult him! Profane world, to court your approbation, whatfolly!—for your approbation never rests but upon vice and vanity. To please thee, my God, and to please thee alone, shall henceforward be the only spring of my ambition. Let the world ridicule me with jeers, and pursue me with bitter taunts; its taunts and jeers shall never influence me again to swerve from thy service, because one glance of thy approbation is more than sufficient to repay all the malignant censures of the world. My suffering brethren, you who have become despised because of your unshaken and firm adherence to the religion of your forefathers—who by your fidelity to your God are cut off from the temporal blessings of a happy constitution, and made exiles in the land that gave you birth, could you expect, or could you even wish to be treated otherwise than our Saviour was by the impious court of Herod?

Revenge is now abroad, and Jesus Christ is ordered back to the court of Pilate: immediately the mob assemble, and children flock around, not to rend the skies with hosannas to the Son of David, as they did on his triumphant entry into the capital of Judea, but to load him with insult—to lead in cruel scorn the Lamb of God through the streets of Jerusalem! There every eye is fixed, every finger pointed, and every mouth vomiting invectives, reproaches, or curses. General ridicule, public laughter or universal hatred pursue and follow him. And art thou, my God! become the contempt of man! The

greatest delinquents, when become public spectacles, meet some pity even in the heart of an enemy; but here no pity, no feeling, no mercy. O God! what art thou reduced to? "I am a worm, and not a man." These were his complaints by the royal prophet; but these public confusions are only the opening scenes to his passion.

Already he appears a second time before Pilate, from whom he soon will hear his doom. This unworthy magistrate had before betrayed his duty, in exposing the innocence of our Saviour to the event of an uncertain judgment. He will now betray it a second time, and seal his guilt in the blood of the innocent. His resolute soul still fluctuates. The attested innocence of Christ; the divine placidity of his countenance; the wisdom and meekness of his words; the admonitions of his wife, who forbade him to interfere in the cause of a man, whom she knew, by mystic dreams, to be something more than mortal; all these perplex and tease him with various doubts. The manifest injustice of condemning innocence stares him on one side; on the other the clamours of the mob frighten him—he would wish to save Christ without prejudice to his interest; but if interest interferes, Christ must go! "What accusation bring you against this man? Upon this question of Pilate, the brooding tumult among the rabble Jews burst forth, and all becomes a ferment. To allay the ferment, this temporising judge devises new plans. Barabbas, a notorious malefactor, was in custody for sedition and murder. Old custom gave a right to the Jews to release at Easter any one prisoner or criminal they chose. Now by ranking Jesus with Barabbas, and proposing them together as criminals for a choice on whom the act of grace might rest, he supposed their fury would cool, and that pity would protect our Saviour: "Whether will you of the two to be released unto you?" Humiliations of my God! when will you end? Unworthy judge, what could induce you so to dishonour my Saviour as to rank him with a vile and infamous malefactor? What could be more unjust than this? Nothing but the conduct of the Jews, who gave the preference to Barabbas. In the general uproar is there no one voice heard to console the heart of Jesus with a preference? No; "The whole multitude cried out, saying: away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas." Barabbas the murderer preferred to Jesus Christ! yes; the slave is preferred to the master—the creature to the creator—consummate guilt to perfect innocence! No longer are remembered the great blessings that overspread Judea by the preaching and the miracles of this man-God. No longer is sanctity a protection from

criminality, or innocence from condemnation. Away with sanctity and innocence—away with morality and virtue—“away with this man,” and let robbery, treason, and murder be defied: “Release unto us Barabbas.”

No doubt, my brethren, you feel, with me, great horror at this scene of our Saviour’s passion—but the baseness and ingratitude which here mark the Jews are daily visible in our own conduct. As often as we prefer to the laws of God, to the maxims of the Gospel, our ambition, our interest, our vanities or pleasures, so often do we prefer Barabbas to Jesus Christ! The Jews, blind and precipitate in their fury, flattered themselves with pleading the cause of zeal and virtue against sedition and imposture; but we, in violating the law of nature, written in the heart, as well as the law of grace, give a preference to Barabbas and reject our God with a full conviction of his sanctity, grandeur, power and divinity; and of the right he has to reign over our minds and hearts—minds and hearts which become degraded and dishonoured when subject to the empire, to the lawless domination of unruly passions!

Pilate now conceives and executes new plans. “I will chastise him,” he says, I will exhibit him a spectacle of horror, “and let him go.” Accordingly these orders are given without limit or restriction, and without restriction or limit are they executed. From the tribunal to the court-yard is our Saviour led: there stripped and bound to a pillar. A band of soldiers are provided with whips furnished with knots as used in military punishment; their rage arms them with double strength, and they lay on the sacred body of Jesus! In the infliction of chastisement, the law certainly meant both restriction and moderation; but in the sufferings of our Saviour, moderation is a term without a meaning—all is excessive—all is terrible. To the severity of the law, the executioners add their own inhumanity, inflamed by hatred. Every blow inflicts a wound. They lash, and tear, and mangle his body; his blood and flesh fly in quantities all around. his torn body, the piteous look, the meekness of our Saviour, instead of pity, create joy in those barbarous men. Their orders came unqualified, and vengeance shall drink deep in his blood, whereof every drop must drain in agony and torture. The sacred body of Christ is now all over one wound. Having endured greater torment than ever came or will ever come to the lot of man to endure, he is loosened from the pillar—but, Lord God, what a spectacle of woe! Who gave Samson sinews to mow down his enemies like grass, to tear asunder like flax the cords and fetters he was bound by, and made his

strength superior to the lion, and to iron bars and massy bolts—this God of Samson is now lowly, and reduced to a spectacle of woe ! To what mighty cause is owing this prostration of power, this abjection of innocence ? To the inbred cruelty of the band of ruffians ? No. To the profligacy of Pilate the Roman governor ? No ; but to your sins, my brethren, and to mine !

Jesus Christ at the pillar has suffered for all the carnal sins of mankind. The criminal indulgence of appetite, the lawless gratification of impure desire, of animal sensuality, the pride and pomp of dress, and all the evils that follow in their train ; these are the rods that lash and tear his body ; these are the sins which he beseeches you from the pillar to refrain from committing ; for by every sin of the flesh we commit, so often do we raise the lash and strike the sacred body of Christ.

New scenes of woe now thicken before us. Horror multiplies on horror, and cruelty becomes refined by barbarous invention. His head, the seat of his blessed soul and of his Divinity, must bleed. For this purpose a cluster of thorny briars are picked up, and platted and pressed around his temples. Every thorn ploughs its way and opens a fresh wound ; and all dripping from head to foot in wounds and blood, “ they put a scarlet cloak about him—and a reed in his right hand. And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying : Hail, King of the Jews. And spitting upon him, they took the reed and struck his head.”

As in the garden our Saviour called forth a miracle to support the agony which his love for man brought on him there, so in Pilate’s court a second miracle became necessary to bear the tortures and the ignominy of those infernal agents. What new sin, my Saviour ! have you left unexpiated at the pillar ? To what mysterious cause is a crown of glory removed to make way for your crown of thorns ? Our abominable pride has platted and fixed his crown of thorns—that unsubdued pride which makes us rebel against divine and human laws—that pride which swells the ambitious mind, which stifles charity, and make us overleap all the laws of justice—this ill-grounded esteem for ourselves, which makes us reflect so wrongfully on our neighbour—those flights of a licentious fancy, which very often at the foot of the altar, during the time of our most tremendous mysteries, are continually occupied in gay and airy, if not lascivious images. These are the thorns that plough their way into the temples of Christ : these are the disorders, which originating in the

mind, our Saviour expiates in his sacred head. How far each of us has contributed to plant those thorns in the sacred head of our Lord, short reflection will show. Our co-operation with the Jews is clearly seen by the malice of our sins—our sins bound him to a stake: our sins were the thorns that opened a thousand wounds in his divine head!

Hitherto have his ignominies and his sufferings been confined chiefly to the rage of his executioners; but now he must become the public sport of the mob. To the derision of the mob, to their blasphemies and maledictions is he exhibited by Pontius Pilate, in all the degrading attire of mock royalty. O ye inhabitants of Jerusalem! look up: "Behold I bring him forth unto you—Behold the man." Is this that glorious deliverer foretold by the prophets; the desire of the patriarchs, the expectation of nations? Is this that flower of the house of Juda, so beautiful to view, on which the angels delight to look? Is this that victorious monarch whose sceptre was to rule the remotest regions of the earth? Is this that immortal king whose empire was to extend beyond the narrow limits of time into the unbounded length of eternity? Can we now descry the least trace of his glory or his power? "Behold the man!" Behold how forlorn and oppressed by a mighty weight of woes. How are his glories effaced, his power eclipsed! My God, and my all! amidst this cloud of humiliations, my faith discovers all thy native greatness. The shade our sins have cast around thee, serves only, in my view, to reflect and heighten the splendour of the divinity: for what less than the immense charity of a God could bear up against such a load of calamities? Ah! could those sentiments be transfused into the hearts of thy enemies! Already they eye him. Their relenting hearts may perhaps give way to compassion. Behold, misguided Jews, "Behold the man" whom you pursue with so much fury—what have you now to fear from him? Is he not the most abject of men? "I am a worm and not a man." But what do I hear? Sudden cries, loud and vociferous, not from a partial few, but from the whole multitude: "Let him be crucified! let him be crucified!" What! spill the blood of the innocent! crucify your Redeemer and your God! Yes; the sentence is nevertheless signed. Great God! the victim is prepared. A mystic wreath binds his head. Already it has been charged with and wounded for our sins; it remains only to see it consumed in expiation of our iniquities. This you shall behold in the last scene of his passion.

Third—Do not expect, my brethren, a distinct detail of

the last sufferings of Christ. Everything henceforth mixes in confusion. All the calamities imaginable are now to crowd together and rush at once on our Saviour's head. The most exquisite torments, the most shocking blasphemies, the most outrageous insults shall succeed and renew each other by turns. The nature of the death of Christ, the very place of execution, the people who follow him, the soldiers that guard him, contribute equally to increase his pain and consummate his sacrifice! Among the eastern nations no death was so infamous as that of the cross—on the cross is Jesus Christ to be nailed. No place about Jerusalem so public as Calvary—on Calvary is Jesus Christ to expire. The inscription over his head proclaims him a king it is true, but still it offers nothing to the eyes of the world but an usurped, a condemned, degraded royalty. His numerous guards and the rabble crowd increase his infamy and multiply the number of his executioners. Behold him labouring up the mountain side with tottering steps. Upon his lacerated shoulders he bears his weighty cross—overburdened with the load, and destitute of strength, he falls at every step. A situation so deplorable, capable of moving the most flinty heart, only exasperates his executioners, who, regardless of his weakness or the difficulty of the up-hill way, drive and goad him up the steep ascent, and before he dies, make him suffer a thousand deaths. The fatal summit is at length attained. Proceed now, cruel executioners, in pity now proceed : glut your rage in the blood of the Lamb. Hasten—put this Jesus to death, who came to purchase your eternal life. Extend his limbs upon the cross—nail those hands and feet which were always employed in pouring down the choicest blessings, or in tracing out the ways of heaven to the forlorn sons of men. Pierce this heart that always bore you the most generous love, that even now glows with fervid zeal for your eternal bliss. You have nothing to fear from his Omnipotence : the heavens are now of brass. That power, on other occasions so dreadful, seems now suspended and bound up in sleep in the bosom of charity. Well has the prophet Isaias foretold, that he would be led like a sheep to slaughter : “Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins—and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearers, and he shall not open his mouth.” This mysterious weakness became subservient to his grand designs. He has undertaken to redeem the world by loading himself with all our guilt : he then will suffer and not conquer : he chooses to die for the salvation of man, rather than live by his

destruction. But lo ! Jesus Christ is fastened to the cross, raised up into the air, and exposed to the view of all Jerusalem.

The comprehension of man is too limited, my brethren, to conceive the extent of what our Saviour suffered in this dolorous moment. In stripping off his garments, his wounds reopen and bleed afresh. In piercing his hands and feet the nerves are torn and start into most painful convulsions. In erecting and pitching the cross, the whole frame of his sacred body is so violently shaken, that his extremities are torn and split to pieces. If he reclines the head it bears upon thorns, which strike more deep into his flesh. If he endeavours to ease one limb he increases the torment of another. This whole body—head, hands, and feet are one large aching wound. O daughters of Jerusalem ! “O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.” (Lam. Jer.) “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” Weep not for Christ ; he desires you ; but weep for and lament those sins which inflame the wrath of God and subject you all to his terrible anger. Bid a final adieu this day to sin ; when temptations arise hereafter, when evil suggestions prompt, remember Mount Calvary—remember, for it is a fundamental truth of our religion, delivered by the great St. Paul—remember, that by every mortal sin we renew the sufferings of our Lord :—“again crucifying Jesus Christ.” When the evil spirit, therefore, or his agents on earth, or the depravity of your nature instigate to sin, recall at once the torments of your Saviour. When pride, or malice, or envy, or ambition arises in the mind, remember the crown of thorns, and do not strike them into the head of your God, by consenting in any way to their suggestions. If custom, heretofore, and bad company have formed your tongue to blaspheme or curse that adorable name, before whom the pillars of heaven tremble, ah ! forbear, for the love of your God, and do not stretch up to his parching lips the sponge dipped in gall ! Drunkards, come this day to the foot of the cross, and console the dying heart of Jesus by an holocaust of that baneful vice—break it down by temperance and industry, and Jesus Christ will die with joy in wiping away all your past sins ! Come, liars, detractors, calumniators, come and offer to your God the sacrifice of your sins, “and great shall you be called in the kingdom of heaven !” O you sensual, carnal men, who breathe only animal life, recall the dignity of your nature, burst asunder the cords that bind you up in sin, and no longer tear the

sacred body of Jesus by your crimes and wickedness. Do not join the Jews in their terrible imprecation—"His blood be upon us, and upon our children." But know, and let the reflection sink deep into your minds, you virtually join the Jews in this abominable imprecation, if you sinners do not this day forsake your sinful ways, because by every sin you renew the Passion of Christ. Let terror then seize you, if the love of God is dormant, whenever sin tempts. His uplifted arm that spared not Jesus, will it spare you?

Mount Calvary alone exhibits the dreadful evil of sin. The extreme agonies of our Saviour are augmented by the cruel insults, the bitter invectives, the outrageous blasphemies of the Jews. Some cry out: "Vah! thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it, save thy own self." Others: "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." Some again: "He saved others; himself he cannot save—if he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross and we will believe him;" whilst others said: "He trusted in God; let him now deliver him." Unhappy Jews! have you forgotten the hosannas wherewith you proclaimed him, a few days ago, the blessed messenger of heaven? Has he not often proved his divinity in subjecting the seas and the winds to his control; in curing all manner of sickness, infirmity, and pain; in expelling demons, raising the dead, and forgiving sinners? And now you call for new proofs of his Godhead. Perverse men, behold now new proofs—behold that admirable patience which makes him bear, in addition to his pains, those insulting reproaches, without even a sigh or a groan—behold that warm zeal, which even on the cross, makes him still thirst for greater sufferings—behold that animated charity, that fervent love for man, which prays and interposes even for his very executioners, "Father, forgive them." Above all, behold that victorious effort of Omnipotence which shortly shall deprive the Author of Life of life, and the world of its most illustrious ornament. O Father, Lord Almighty God! look down now on thy Son—pale and damp his face appears—his closing eyes admit no more than shadows—his head droops—he moans—he dies.

The sun withdraws his light—the moon blushes—the earth shakes—the veil of the temple is rent in two—the rocks split—the monuments burst asunder—the dead arise—all nature laments in silent, moving language the death of its great Author! Amidst this universal confusion can the stony heart of man alone remain unmoved and repose in peace amidst his sins? It was sin alone that brought Jesus Christ to Calvary.

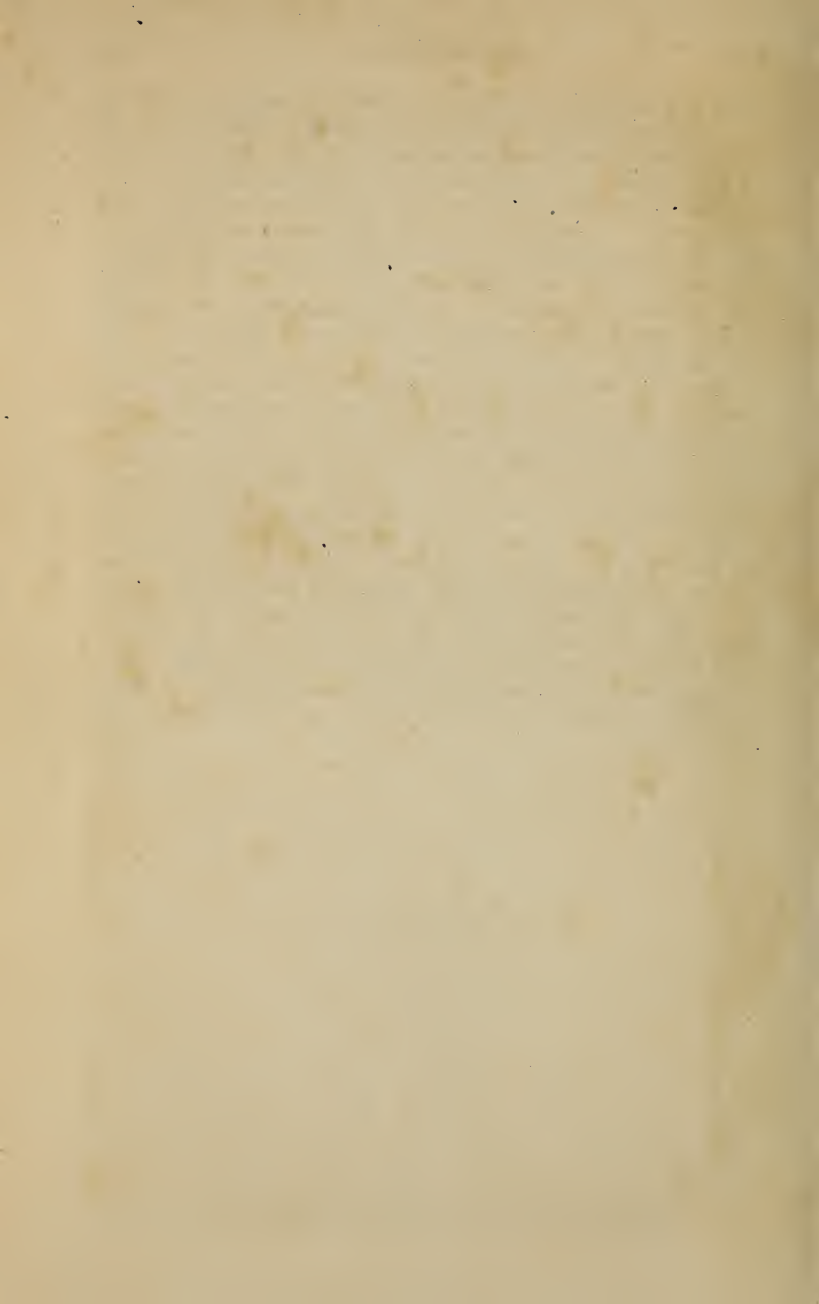
They bound him, lashed him, abused him, crucified him, and will you bind him again, scourge him, abuse and crucify him by committing sin any more? Methinks I hear you all say No! If any should be unhappy enough not to join in that answer, I fear very much they are fallen into an obduracy, that knows no danger, that fears no punishment.

Jesus Christ, GOD BLESSED FOR EVER, dies upon the cross—for what end? To procure our eternal salvation by atoning for our sins. Yes, my brethren, it was upon the cross our Saviour completed the grand work of our redemption. All his other sufferings were relative to this last action, and derived from thence all their merit. Upon the cross the anger of heaven is appeased, hell subdued, and that sentence reversed which was pronounced in heaven, as St. Paul declares, against rebellious man. No longer, then, let wild despair break forth in hideous shrieks. No longer are the gloomy shades of death terrible, since our Saviour by his death has opened the gates of heaven: “Lift up your gates, ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates; and the king of glory shall enter in.” Those immortal gates, shut for so many ages, are now open by the cross of Christ, for the admission of all the spotless, and all the penitent children of Adam. But notwithstanding the great blessings which his death draws on the world; notwithstanding the salutary, all-saving streams which flow from his sacred wounds, how many souls redeemed by his blood will be lost, and lost for ever! For you and me has our Saviour died—for his greatest enemies this day has he extended his arms upon the cross. That venerable cross approach this day with reverence and love, with humility and sorrow for your past sins and true cause of his sufferings. Pour forth your heart before him—tell him how great your sorrows are—tell him from this day forward you never will offend him more. Invoke his mercy, his forgiveness, his blessing.

Behold the emblem of that adorable Being stretched upon the cross. I do not exhibit this image or that wood for the purpose of your adoration. A charge so illiberal, so unfounded; so false, the Catholic Church revolts against. We adore nothing but God alone. His image we venerate out of respect to himself, and to raise by sensible representations more animated sentiments of piety. Behold, then, this venerable image. Pale and wan his lips appear; suffused his eyes; his royal head encircled with thorns; his side pierced, his hands and feet transfixes with nails. Why, O my God! why all these wounds? why these streams from every limb? My sins, alas! and yours—our sins have been his executioners. He

who was supreme in happiness, glorious and immortal by nature, came down from all his joys above, in order, by dying for us on the cross, to raise us up to heaven. The immensity of his love for man strikes me at one view of his cross; the magnitude of that grand evil, sin, strikes me also—but my abominable ingratitude and wickedness in committing sin, and thereby crucifying my God, oppress my soul with unutterable woe. If my detestable pride, O my God, my evil designs, and wicked projects have wreathed your royal head with thorns; if my intemperance, sensuality, and vanity have torn you at the pillar; if my drunkenness, lies, calumnies, slanders, curses, and blasphemies have ministered unto you gall and vinegar; if my immoralities, profanations, oppressions, and criminal doings have nailed you on the cross, receive those heart-felt sorrows I now feel, in union with your passion! Depart from me, henceforth, O sin, and let your holy grace aid me, my Saviour, for you know my weakness is excessive. I will from this moment, die to my sins for the love of you who died on the cross for the love of me. I beseech you by your precious wounds, to strengthen these our resolutions. Shed down the influence of those celestial gifts, which will support us amidst the combats of this uncertain life. A sudden light beams in upon me. Methinks I hear the prophet say: “You shall draw waters in joy from the fountains of your Saviour.” Where?—In the kingdom of heaven. Amen, sweet Jesus!

THE END.



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